

WHY I'M IN LOVE WITH LEONARDO

Suzanne Moore on DiCaprio's charms

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NOT QUITE SO WILDE ABOUT LIAM NEESON

Why David Hare got it wrong over Oscar

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OUR SLEAZY FRIENDS IN THE NORTH

Newcastle's soccer bosses face penalty

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POET LAUREATE OF DETROIT'S UNDERWORLD

John Walsh interviews Elmore Leonard

THE MAGAZINE

INDEPENDENT

Saturday 21 March 1998 70p No 3,584

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

The tough words our children must now learn

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

TEACHERS were yesterday given hour-by-hour instructions on how to teach reading – the most detailed intervention in the classroom made by a government. The document emphasises the importance of traditional methods, especially phonics, which involves teaching words according to letter sounds. Under the proposals 11-year-olds will be expected to know the meanings of such words as calligram, cinquin, rhapsody and mnemonic.

Too many teachers have assumed that children who are given books will learn to read from the context, it says. It also spells out what teachers should do in the "literacy hour" on reading, spelling and grammar which primary schools will have to hold each day from September. Ministers intend to issue similar guidelines on maths and to introduce a daily numeracy hour. Teachers said the literacy guidelines, which cover the six years of primary school, were so prescriptive that they would stifle children's enjoyment of reading and hold back their progress.

David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, said parents would now have a clear idea what their children should be learning in each term. "This framework gives clear and detailed guidance on planning the teaching of literacy in primary schools using tried and tested methods."

"It is a practical tool for day-to-day teaching which will liberate teachers to be able to use their professional skills without duplicating work plans." Even the term during which children should learn each sound such as "ch" and "bl" is specified. So is the timetable for learning different spelling patterns. All primary teachers will be required to ensure that they can use the approved methods.

The new national literacy

strategy is not compulsory but most teachers are expected to use it. Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector of Schools, is a strong supporter of the guidelines and inspectors will check on how reading is being taught. Stephen Byers, the school-standards minister, said this year that teachers whose pupils achieved poor results and who were not using the methods would be called to account.

Anne Barnes, general secretary of the National Association of Teachers, said many teachers had been concerned about how to teach reading and would be reassured by the help being offered. But she suggested the literacy hour, in which the teacher will teach the whole class together for two-thirds of the time, might hold back bright children. "A lot of children will be very frustrated by the emphasis on phonics. All children have to learn phonics but they can become seriously discouraged if teachers persist with them too long. The point of reading is to enjoy a good story. If you are constantly holding children up by asking them to sound out words, you are going to put them off reading."

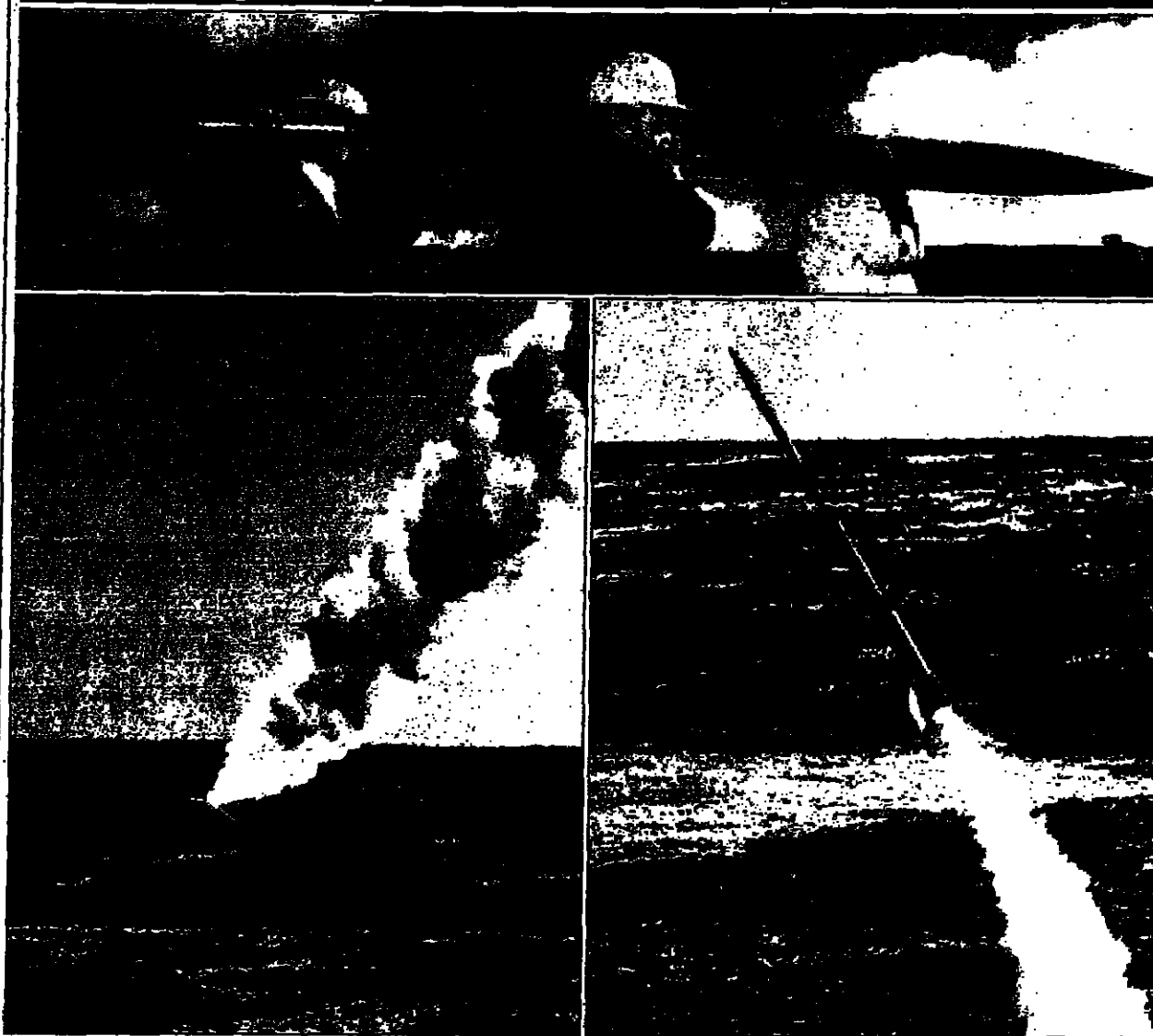
The Department for Education said it had no statistics to show how many schools were using approved methods. "It is based on the best practice to be found in schools," a spokesman said.

However, research has shown that most teachers use a mixture of methods, including phonics. Most experts argue that phonics alone does not improve reading. The Government is spending £59m this year on literacy training for teachers and more books. Training will begin after Easter and each teacher will eventually receive three days' training.

Mr Blunkett will today announce that the Government will fund 562 summer literacy schools this year, an 11-fold increase on last year.

Literacy tests, page 3

What goes up... must inevitably come down



And we have liftoff. But not for long. Starchaser 3 was in fine shape before the launch, top, and looked good for a few seconds afterwards, right. But then it all went horribly wrong

BRITAIN'S efforts to put a man into space in a private rocket yesterday went up, up and... away, writes Charles Arthur. At 11am on Dartmoor, Steve Bennett pressed the red button to launch Starchaser 3, a 22ft experimental rocket designed to whizz 5,000 metres into the air.

At 11am and a few seconds, he was gazing at burning scrub where the rocket had crashed, harming nobody but demonstrating that it's one thing to launch a rocket but quite another to get it to fly.

He later blamed the failure on the rocket

motors: "I was trying to light seven motors together, but a couple ignited before the others and it hit the side of the hill. We will put it down to experience."

The rocket took Mr Bennett two years to build virtually singlehanded, and included nine computers and 11 rocket motors – and was 10 times more powerful than Mr Bennett's last rocket, Starchaser 2, which reached a height of 600 metres in 1996.

The launch initially went well – but a couple of hundred feet up the rocket gradually turned tail in the way familiar to witnesses

of the Ariane 5 launch in June 1996 (blown up 30 seconds after takeoff), and early tests of the prototype Trident nuclear missile (took off and then dived into the sea).

The next steps in his plan had been to launch another version of Starchaser 3 in a flight over the sea, and then to launch a satellite into low Earth orbit, and finally to put a person into orbit – an essential step before aiming for a \$10m prize being offered by an American company to anyone rocketing three people 100 kilometres (62 miles) into space and bringing them back safely.

Photographs: Sam Morgan Moore

Now Murdoch may grab the Lord's Test for satellite TV

By Rob Brown
Media Editor

CRICKET lovers may soon have to subscribe to satellite or cable television to watch live coverage of home England Test matches. So will many other armchair sports fans if the Government decides to follow the recommendations of an independent working party published yesterday.

In what would be a blow for some "free to air" terrestrial broadcasters but a major financial boon for sports, the advisory group is prepared to give BSkyB the chance to seize many of the so-called "crown jewels of sport", including all Wimbledon matches apart from the finals and semi-finals.

It would also lower the protection for the Fifa World Cup finals after the tournament in France this summer, but it would guarantee the terrestrials more access to the European Football championships.

The group – whose members included Jack Charlton, Steve Cram and Michael Parkinson – is advocating that the list of protected sports events should be split into two tiers. Terrestrials would be guaranteed live coverage of a shortened A list and would have to make do with highlights or deferred coverage of those in the B list.

The report was welcomed yesterday by Claire Ward, Labour MP for Watford and a member of the Commons Culture, Media and Sport select committee. "It recognises ...

that sport has become much more commercial in nature and a great deal of advancement and progress in sport is based on funding they receive from selling the rights to broadcasting," she said.

"While recognising that some will feel the move on test cricket is a great shame, I'm not sure any of our public service or free to air broadcasters can justify what is effectively 25 days of one sport being broadcast."

Simon Johnson, ITV's head of business affairs, took a similarly pragmatic view. "We're slightly disappointed the Government hasn't left the list as it was, but we've never relied on government legislation to do our negotiation for us," he said.

Reducing the number of listed events reserved for terrestrial broadcasters seems certain to anger many sports fans, who will resent having to pay for the right to watch events which have traditionally been screened by the BBC and ITV.

But the bodies running major sports are keen to be freed up to auction off viewing rights for big occasions to satellite broadcasters. They are eager to reap the same kind of commercial dividends as football's Premier league, whose finances were transformed when it struck a £500m deal with Sky for the rights to screen live soccer.

Chris Smith, the Culture, Media and Sport Secretary, is expected to announce his response to the report in a few weeks.

Wanted – a committee to deal with the end of the world

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

THE FATE of the Earth will in future be decided by committee. At least, if somebody thinks that we are about to be wiped out by a wayward asteroid – as seemed to be the case a week ago.

In future a group of 15 astronomers across the United States will check the calculations involved, just to see whether we really are going to be flattened. What's more, they'll try to decide what we should do in order

to avoid catastrophe – and not just the sort that leaves cosmic egg on otherwise eminent faces.

The committee is likely to include Brian Marsden, the Harvard astronomer who warned nine days ago that asteroid 1997 XF11 could hit the Earth and doom humankind in 2028. Hours later, the US space agency NASA issued more detailed calculations showing that it would miss us by 600,000 miles. "The whole episode has left a nasty taste in my mouth," said the professor.

The members for the new committee were being chosen at a meeting this week in Houston, Texas. They agreed to use their combined expertise to calculate the risks to the Earth when an asteroid looks like a threat. "If it's a real threat, the announcement will be made and steps will be taken to mitigate the threat," said Donald Yeomans, a NASA scientist.

Everyone involved agreed that the gaffe over 1997 XF11 could have been avoided had the International Astronomical Union, which issued Professor Marsden's statement, and NASA communicated earlier. "It's in

our best interest to try to get harmonious again," he said. When an astronomer discovers that an asteroid could threaten the Earth, the committee will review the data and do its own calculations to determine how serious the threat is.

"Within a matter of a day or two, the situation will become far more clear and it will either become a non-event or some appropriate announcement will be made – but not until this committee's had a chance to chew on it for a bit," Mr Yeomans said.

Today's news

Striking French close Calais

THOUSANDS of Britons attempting to cross the Channel were left stranded yesterday as French workers closed the port of Calais and blocked Le Shuttle services in a 24-hour action which meant the cancellation of Dover-Calais ferries.

Page 3

Glasgow loses out to Edinburgh

GLASGOW lost out doubly to Edinburgh – first in the hosting of the Scottish Parliament, and then in its bid for money to establish a National Gallery of Scottish Art and Design.

Page 5

The Toon saga, page 18

News of the World's claims, they have not issued a libel writ. Mr Tyrrell said: "If they did say these things, they totally apologise and it was totally out of character ... They don't remember what was said."

He added that a complaint had been made to the newspaper about its reporting methods.

In Newcastle last night, fans were adamant that the two soccer chiefs should go. John Regan, secretary of the Newcastle United Independent Supporters' Association, said: "Their arrogance belies belief – they are refusing to go despite massive public support against them."

The Toon saga, page 18

Fury as Newcastle chiefs refuse to go

By Ian Burrell

NEWCASTLE United fans reacted furiously yesterday to news that the club chairman, Freddy Shepherd, and vice-chairman Douglas Hall would not be resigning.

Mr Shepherd yesterday failed in a High Court attempt to get an injunction against the *News of the World* to prevent the

newspaper publishing further details in its next edition of a conversation he had with an undercover reporter.

Newcastle supporters have been calling for the pair to step down since Sunday when the newspaper published remarks they are alleged to have made insulting the club's star players, mocking the supporters and describing North-eastern women as "dogs".

Yesterday, Gerard Tyrrell, Mr Hall's solicitor, said his client had no intention of resigning as they had been "stitched up right royally". Mr Hall owns 57 per cent of the club's shares and Mr Shepherd owns 7 per cent.



Hall: Owns 57 per cent of club

Alarmingly for the club, the three independent non-executive directors of Newcastle United plc were said yesterday to be considering their positions.

It is understood that Sir Terence Harrison, Denis Cassidy and John Mayo will resign in protest if Mr Shepherd and Mr Hall are unable to disprove the allegations by legal action because of worries about the consequences for their own reputations.

Sir Terence, the chairman of Newcastle United plc, the quoted parent company of the football club, is also chairman of the building firm Alfred McAlpine. Mr Cassidy is the former head of Liberty, the London department store and Boddington's brewery. Mr Mayo is finance director of electronics group GEC.

Although Mr Shepherd and Mr Hall take issue with the

THE NEW ASTRA VAUXHALL

"Drive it and believe."

WHAT CAR

QUALITY IS A RIGHT NOT A PRIVILEGE.

French protestors shut down Chunnel

By Randeep Ramesh
and Katherine Butler

THOUSANDS of Britons attempting to cross the Channel were left stranded yesterday as French workers closed the port of Calais and blocked Le Shuttle services.

The 24-hour action meant the cancellation of Dover-Calais ferry services and severe disruption to the car-carrying Channel tunnel trains.

French ferry staff and dockers used about 20 cars to block the motorway entrance to the Tunnel for four hours, barring all freight and tourist passengers. They were protesting against the EU's proposed abolition of duty-free sales from the summer of 1999.

Those companies with cross-Channel operations managed to divert some services to different destinations. P&O Stena Line, the newly combined ferry company, cancelled its Dover-Calais services and sailed to Zeebrugge, while Hoverspeed operated to Ostend rather than Calais.

Eurostar escaped the chaos - providing the only cross-Channel services unaffected from London to Paris and Brussels.

Duty-free shopping remains a contentious point of the "single market". Campaigners say it will cost up to 23,000 jobs in the UK alone and most will go within a year of the change.

Yesterday's action coincided with a meeting of European finance ministers in York. Although duty-free is not officially on the agenda, the Calais protests have turned up the heat.

Ireland's finance minister, Charlie McCreevy, whose gov-

ernment has been leading calls for a further reprieve for the trade beyond June 1999, will be looking to his German colleague, Theo Waigel, for signs of support for a study on the impact on employment.

Mr Waigel is already under pressure from campaigners in Germany who fear massive losses in the North Sea ferry ports and who now have the support of the Opposition's Gerhard Schröder, tipped to become Germany's chancellor.

The French strike, which began early yesterday morning, led to huge traffic jams around Calais, affecting British travellers including many lorry drivers. Tempers flared as truckers and holidaymakers accused the French police of standing by while the blockade continued.

Services on Le Shuttle did not resume until mid-afternoon. Eurotunnel released a statement saying "the company will not tolerate any disruptions and we have been in touch with the French authorities reiterating this."

The Freight Transport Association, which represents haulage firms, estimated the cost of the 24-hour strike to British industry as more than £500,000.

Experts have also pointed out that duty-free encourages travel. A recent study by the Centre of Economics and Business Research predicted that 115,000 fewer visits will be made to the UK by the year 2005 if duty-free sales were axed.

Barry Goddard, secretary general of the Duty-Free Confederation, said: "Duty and tax-free shopping is good for Britain and creates jobs."



Passionate about passion: David Hare, the darling of the chattering classes

Photograph: John Voos

Passion is all for ideologue of the theatre

IN THE NEWS

DAVID HARE

IT IS difficult for this newspaper to give David Hare the praise he deserves as we would, according to Hare himself, be praising from the perspective of ignorance. "The Independent," Hare once wrote, "is staffed by fools who know nothing about art."

The crime that provoked that denunciation was that we ran an obituary of a film director which said the dead man had had "an uneven career". But that is Hare - passionate in his defence of high art, passionate in his contempt for those who question it.

He is also passionate in defence of passion. His latest play, *The Judas Kiss*, which opened in London this week, is ostensibly about Oscar Wilde but deals with recurrent Hare themes, love and betrayal.

Hare is rightly contemptuous of those who say it must be harder for a very wealthy man than it is for others

to retain idealism. His plays show he has. Though he would also be rightly contemptuous of such a lazy phrase. 50-year-old Hare, with 30 years in the theatre, remains the darling of the chattering classes. The first night of *The Judas Kiss* at the Playhouse Theatre was attended by the artist Eduardo Paolozzi, the novelist Ian McEwan, theatre directors, actors and editors of left-wing journals.

The argument in Hare's work is normally guaranteed to send his audience home with a warm glow. His plays - notably his National Theatre trilogy on the church, the legal system and the

Labour Party - not only mine our doubts about established institutions, they explore the nature of Englishness and they examine the depths of love and loss in relationships. But in cultural matters, the winner is usually well signposted. The conflict between theatre and television in *Amy's View* is no contest, with Judi Dench's passionate defence of theatre all too easily exposing the shallowness of a pretentious film director.

But then there is no contest for Hare. The post-modernist eclecticism which sees all art as equally worthy of attention leaves him cold. He once gave an agenda-setting denunciation of this, fittingly enough on the studiedly eclectic BBC *Late Show*, arguing that Keats is better than Bob Dylan, and it's time we started prioritising again.

In 1994 he gave a lecture to the Fabian Society, a lecture he did not intend to be made public. Referring to the play

Absence Of War, researched during Labour's 1992 election campaign, he said that Labour's decision to remodel itself in the Eighties "has left a Labour Party terrified of controversy, terrified of internal argument, and in my own tiny corner of interest, terrified of a play that asks what has happened to its own ability to give voice to its great passion for social justice".

Hare's plays have been criticised for debate not always matched by theatricality, and for too few shades of grey in that debate, with women often cast as the liberal voice of reason. But they contain a beauty, not just of language, but of integrity - a challenge to society to rethink its position on love, on faith, on politics. Even fools who know nothing about art can recognise in that a great contribution to cultural life.

— David Lister
Not so Wilde about the boys, page 20

SIR PETER HALL IN HIS SEVENTIES DIARIES

"David appeared in my office, sporting what I'm sure was a deliberately torn sweater. He is one of the warmest and most generous men I know, but he hides it under an icy and slightly manner that is serious and flip by turns. He is a naturally paranoid, nervous and edgy."

NEIL KINNOCK ON HARE'S PLAY 'ABSENCE OF WAR'

"It shows me as an arsehole."

HARE ON HIS MARRIAGE

"When I got married again I said, 'Oh my God, this is going to be the end of the world', but actually it has had the opposite effect... I'm glad to say that being happy hasn't proved fatal to my career."

HARE ON HIS FATHER

"My father was a sailor and was away for 11 months of the year. He was a complete enigma... But he came back with money and that was the thing. He came with a big roll of notes, which sailors were still given in those days, and because he was a pursuer, he'd bring frozen sheep and fruit from New Zealand and toys from Hong Kong and these things would pour into our lives for a couple of weeks and then he'd go away again and we'd be back on mince and potatoes. So he represented wealth and plenty."

STELLA GONET, ACTRESS

"He writes fantastically well for women, and that's a challenge because he makes them the heart and the soul of the work. The responsibility of delivering all that can be very daunting - he gives you every passion to play with, the whole physical thing of getting through it, it can be exhausting."

Why an 11-year-old must know a grapheme from a cinquain

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

THE NEW national literacy strategy gives teachers lists of common words which their pupils should be able to read by a particular age.

For five-year-olds there are 45 words including "look", "come" and "away". By six they should be familiar with at least 150 words including "laugh", "people", "schools" and "because". They should also be able to read easily the days of the week, months of the year, numbers one to 20, common colours, and their own and the school's name and address.

By the age of seven they should be able to spell 113 words such as "where", "after" and "who". Aged eight or nine, they should learn to read and

TEST YOUR WORDPOWER

Do you know what these words mean? Teachers are expected to and they should form part of most 11-year-olds' vocabulary. Answers at foot of page

1. Assonance
2. Calligram
3. Cinquain
4. Grapheme
5. Homonym
6. Mnemonic

spell another 119 words including "different", "important", "thought" and "sometimes". Guidance on teaching children phonics and spelling is equally detailed. During the

second term of the year in which they are six, they should investigate, read and spell words ending in -ff, -ll, -ss, -ck and -ng.

During the first term of the following year they should learn the common spelling patterns for oo, ar, oy and ow and "should recognise and take account of commas and exclamation marks in reading aloud".

The literacy hour should be divided into four, with the teacher teaching the whole class together for two-thirds of the time. At present most estimates suggest that primary school teachers spend only about 40 per cent of the time teaching the whole class.

For the first 15 minutes, teachers should share a book or poem with the whole class, emphasising understanding,

spelling, punctuation and grammar. For the next 15 minutes, teachers should concentrate on teaching the whole class phonics and spelling through individual words.

For the following 20 minutes, the teacher should group the children by ability and teach one group while the others work independently at reading or writing.

Finally, the teacher should gather the whole class to reinforce what they have learned and to let pupils talk about what they have done.

The document says that in recent years phonics have been neglected in favour of methods which rely on giving children books and assuming that they will learn from the context how words are spelled and what they mean.

University defies police over 'obscene' photos

By Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

A UNIVERSITY yesterday challenged the police to prosecute them for publishing "obscene material" after their ruling body unanimously voted to back their vice chancellor who has refused to destroy pictures by the controversial photographer Robert Mapplethorpe.

In the latest round of what is rapidly becoming an important test case against censorship an emergency meeting of the Senate of the University of Central England in Birmingham gave its support for moves to oppose the police. This follows a similar stance taken by the late American photographer's publishers who had been asked to pulp books of his that they held in stock or remove two pictures that are deemed to be "offensive" and illegal.

The action is being taken by the paedophile and pornography unit of the West Midlands police, which is expected to re-



A still-life photograph by Mapplethorpe

commend that the university and Random House publishers should be prosecuted under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act. Lawyers acting for the Crown Prosecution Service decided two photographs were likely to "deprave or corrupt" and ad-

vised the police that they had grounds to have them destroyed.

Dr Peter Knight, the university's vice-chancellor, said after yesterday's meeting: "If the Director of Public Prosecutions decides to proceed... then I as vice chancellor and the publisher will be arrested and charged. We would vigorously defend our case."

A copy of the book was seized by the police last October. They had been alerted by a chemist who developed photographs of the book taken by a student for a thesis. The photographs the police want to ban are "Helmut and Brooks, NYC, 1978", which shows a man "fisting" (a form of anal sex) another man. And "Jim and Tom, Sausalito, 1977", which is of a man in a dog collar, leather mask and trousers, urinating into another man's mouth.

A police spokeswoman said: "We will be submitting a file to the [CPS] in relation to possible... action in relation to this case."

□ "Vices, Hyacinth and Orchid" (left), by Robert Mapplethorpe, is for sale at Christie's in New York in April.

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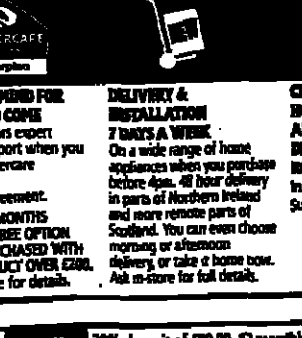
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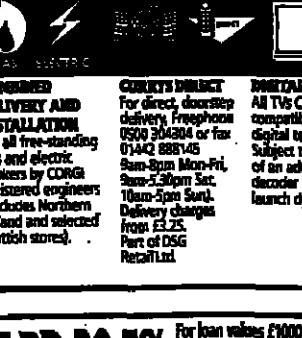
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Parliament kept out in double blow for Glasgow

By Kim Sengupta

ONE CAN imagine the howls of outrage down Sauchiehall Street. In a day of a double whammy, Glasgow lost the initial hosting of the Scottish Parliament to Edinburgh, and then lost its bid for money to establish a National Gallery of Scottish Art and Design.

The first blow came from Donald Dewar, Secretary of State for Scotland. Glasgow, which had promised a "bare-knuckle fight" to be the first home of the nation's first parliament in 300 years, was told it had lost the battle to the old rival Edinburgh, traditionally viewed as the city of the "establishment".

Then came the news that the Heritage Lottery Fund had turned down the £18.5m grant application for the gallery.

The Government had from the outset shown a preference for Edinburgh to site the new parliament from its inception. That was confirmed yesterday despite an offer from Glasgow to house it in the Charing Cross building formerly used by Strathclyde Regional Council.

Mr Dewar said: "The Glasgow option... was very attractive. It offered a suitable debating chamber and ample office accommodation nearby. I am very grateful to the Glasgow Council." However, he continued: "A decisive factor was the need for the Parliament to put down roots in the vitally important early years."

"It would have been difficult for the Parliament and its staff established in Glasgow for the first two years to face a move to Edinburgh. That would be hard on businesses and other organisations seeking to establish a presence near to the Parliament."

The Glasgow option had been expected to cost just £3m, and Edinburgh would be more expensive. But Mr Dewar said that was almost

entirely because rates were higher there.

Asked if he expected the people of Glasgow to be bitter about the decision, the Secretary of State responded: "In a competition between sites there is always going to be a measure of disappointment. I hope they will not imagine that this was some kind of stitch-up to deny them."

But the Scottish Nationalist Party leader Alex Salmond claimed it indeed was a stitch-up. "It looks as though Glasgow was used as a pawn in order to get a better bid from Edinburgh," he said. "It's a shabby way to treat Glasgow and leaves a bad taste in the mouth."

Mr Salmond added that the dispute between the two cities could have been avoided by placing the Parliament in Calton Hill, the favoured location of traditionalists.

Glasgow officials were aggrieved but sought to stay on the moral high ground. A City Council spokesman said: "We are proud of the case we made for Glasgow and believe that on quality and cost it was the best bid. Obviously we are disappointed the Secretary of State did not feel able to agree with us."

Edinburgh City Council members felt the natural order of things had been maintained. The Lord Provost, Eric Milligan, said: "This is a recognition that Edinburgh is the natural home of the Parliament and that it must meet here from the very beginning."

Timothy Clifford, director of the National Galleries of Scotland, noted the Lottery Fund's rejection of the Scottish Art and Design project came in the midst of focus on nationhood with the Scottish Parliament in the news. "It is an irony that with a Parliament about to sit in Scotland again, and with Scotland so conscious of nationhood, the concept of a Scottish gallery has been rejected," he said.



Net loss: Rachel Anderson, who has been refused entry to a players' award ceremony because of her sex

Photograph: Tom Pilton

Female football agent ruled offside

By Rosa Prince

THE ONLY female football agent in England is being refused entry to the players' award ceremony because she is a woman.

Rachel Anderson, 40, was last year turned away at the door from the Professional Football Association's award ceremony, which is held at a London hotel.

When she was invited to this year's ceremony, which takes place on 5 April, by the West Ham player Julian Dicks, she and Mr Dicks contacted the PFA in advance to make sure the same thing would not happen.

She was told in a letter from PFA Chief Executive Gordon Taylor: "The PFA Awards Dinner has been a men-only evening for the 25 years

since its inception and the PFA Management Committee have made a decision that it should remain so."

Ms Hunter, a respected Football Association licensed agent, represents 27 footballers, including Mr Dicks, Sheffield United player Don Hutchinson and Michael Hughes, who is also at West Ham. In her seven years working in football Ms Hunter said this is the only time she has encountered sexism.

The Professional Football Association is a trade union for past and present professional footballers, and is affiliated to the TUC.

Their annual dinner includes an award bestowed by the players themselves, and is considered the most prestigious accolade a footballer can receive.

At last year's ceremony Ms

Hunter was turned away when her ticket was checked by Brendan Batson, Deputy Chief Executive at the PFA.

Ms Hunter said: "He came up to me and said: 'There seems to have been some mistake. You can't come in, it's men only'."

When Ms Hunter asked Mr Batson, who is black, how he would feel if he were turned away on the grounds of his race, he replied: "It is not the same issue at all."

When Mr Dicks wrote to the PFA saying he was showing them a yellow card for their treatment of Ms Hunter, he was told by Mr Taylor: "Wherever possible we attempt to be progressive. I do not consider the policy of the Management Committee on this matter to be regressive... As a matter of fact you are

the only one of our members who has written to ask a female guest to accompany them in 25 years."

The PFA told Ms Hunter they would end their men-only rule once women became members of the Association. However, this is unlikely to happen in the near future, as the PFA represents professional players and the women's game in this country remains amateur.

Katherine Knight of the FA said the Association was fully committed to the participation of women in football as spectators, players and administrators. She said: "The PFA's treatment of Rachel Anderson does seem to go against the general trend in the football in the way women are being viewed."

The PFA did not return several telephone calls.

Lawrence inquiry set to resume

THE INQUIRY into the 1993 racist murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence in south-east London is to resume on Tuesday.

The hearing was postponed minutes after it began last Monday when the Lawrence family's legal team raised "very legitimate concerns" over a newspaper article accusing the inquiry chairman, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, of racial insensitivity.

However, after "assurances" by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who "reaffirmed" his "complete confidence" in Sir William, the Lawrences decided to continue to take part in the inquiry.

MS man not guilty

A MAN with multiple sclerosis who killed a woman and injured four pedestrians when his car careened out of control was yesterday found not guilty of causing death by dangerous driving by reason of insanity. Reginald Pull, 46, of Shotesham, Norfolk, lost control of his Ford Fiesta in the centre of Norwich in December 1996.

Bank bomb

A BOMB was lobbed into a crowded bank building by republicans in the centre of Londonderry yesterday. The device, contained in a hokkai, was thrown into the bank by members of the breakaway Continuity IRA. No one was hurt in the attack.

Range Rover recall

Rover is to recall 15,700 Range Rover Classic and Land Rover Discovery vehicles because of an airbag problem, it was announced yesterday. Four cases have been reported in America of the driver's airbag inflating unnecessarily, although no accidents resulted.

MPs go green

MPs are to be given a special bicycle allowance in a move seen as a boost to the battle on traffic pollution. From 1 April, they will get a 6.2p per mile payment while on Commons business.

Meanwhile, the Queen is backing the drive for cleaner air - by ordering that four of the Royal Mews cars should be converted to run on liquid petroleum gas.

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Parents reassured flying does not kill babies

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

PARENTS planning to take young babies on long-haul flights were advised not to worry yesterday after research suggested some infants could be at risk of cot death from the reduced oxygen levels in the cabin. Experts said that flying appeared to be safe in the first year of life although it was probably wise to wait a week after birth to ensure the infant was healthy.

They were responding to findings from a study of 34 infants who were exposed to air containing 6 per cent less oxygen than normal, similar to that in an aircraft cabin or up a mountain. The babies were carefully monitored and four suffered a fall in oxygen levels in their blood associated with disturbed heart rhythms and shortness of breath. They were given extra oxygen immediately.

The study, by Professor David Southall and colleagues from the North Staffordshire Hospital Centre, in Stoke-on-Trent, published in the *British Medical Journal*, was carried out after two sets of parents seen at the hospital reported losing a child to cot

death after a long-haul flight. Yesterday, Anne Diamond, the television presenter who has played prominent role in cot death campaigns, disclosed that her own baby son died two days after a flight.

In an editorial in the *BMJ*, Anthony Milner, professor of neonatology at St Thomas' Hospital, London, said the findings needed to be put in context. British Airways, which flies more than 34 million passengers a year, says there have been no recorded instances of cot deaths during a flight in the past 10 years.

Professor Milner said the physiological effects of breathing low levels of oxygen on infants had been carefully studied, but these did not necessarily mean they were at greater risk. "All the epidemiological evidence indicates that ... flying appears to be safe in the first year of life."

The Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths said: "The study did not demonstrate a greater cot death risk on an aeroplane than on the ground. It tells us that some babies react more dramatically than others to a drop in oxygen and this is an interesting finding which needs to be pursued in further research."



Ronny baby: Experts say that flying appears to be safe in the first year and BA, which flies 34 million passengers a year, has no recorded instances of cot death. Photograph: David Ross

Expert who likes to court controversy

THERE are not many paediatricians who would have contemplated carrying out a study in which infants were deprived of oxygen, writes Jeremy Lawrence. Even the North Staffordshire Hospital Centre's own research ethics committee initially rejected the proposal because of fears about the possible danger to babies involved. But Professor David Southall is used to courting controversy.

He was the doctor responsible for covertly videotaping parents suspected of child abuse while their children were in hospital. Between 1986 and 1994, 39 children were filmed being attacked by apparently caring parents and step-parents which led to 33 criminal prosecutions.

However, his methods were criticised by psychiatrists concerned about infringement of privacy and the risk of exposing children to further harm during the surveillance operation and he was accused of acting as an agent provocateur.

In a separate study conducted between 1989 and 1993 in which premature babies with breathing problems were placed on a new type of respirator, some parents complained they were not told their children were being given experimental treatment. In all 122 babies took part, of whom 28 died and 15 were left brain damaged.

A number of families contacted a local solicitor, James Evans, claiming their children had been used as guinea pigs and that they had only found out about the trial when Professor Southall and his colleagues published their findings in a *British Medical Journal* American journal which highlighted the dangers of the treatment.

ment. However, the hospital said the parents had been told about the trial but may have forgotten because of the stress they were under.

Mr Evans yesterday said inquiries were continuing to see whether the parents had a legal case. "The questions are whether proper informed consent was obtained and whether the ventilator was safe."

The ventilator had said. Ethical questions have also been raised about the new study, published in today's *British Medical Journal*, which are examined in two accompanying commentaries. Despite its initial concerns, the hospital ethics committee agreed to let the study go ahead because its members were 'convinced it would be safe, with a paediatrician on standby, and that the parents would be properly informed and no coercion would be used. However, Julian Savulescu, of the Centre for Human Bioethics, Victoria, Australia, says there was already some evidence of risk before the study began, it had no therapeutic benefit and it is unclear whether the parents were fully aware of the danger.

The only benefit to the parents was in learning whether their child was one who responded badly to a reduction in oxygen levels in the air. They could then avoid long-haul flights or mountain holidays until their child was older.

Mr Savulescu concludes there is some value in the study but "a balance must always be struck between discouraging research which might eliminate continuing harm and making it as safe and ethical as possible."

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A TWO-YEAR
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The deck is stacked against us, say casinos

By Louise Jury

CASINOS – dealt an unwelcome hand in the Budget – are fighting back and demanding reform of the 30-year-old gaming laws.

Reeling under a surprise hike in gambling duty, the casinos said the increase could force gambling underground.

On Monday they will call for the regulations which have rigidly governed their industry for 30 years to be updated.

The main irritation for the casino operators is rules on the maximum number of gaming machines permitted in any club. The number was increased from three to six in 1996.

But most casinos in Europe

1968 when the Gaming Act was rushed through Parliament to regulate a rapidly increasing number of clubs.

The British Casino Association will argue on Monday that things have changed since the year of the Paris riots and assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

A spokesman said: "The world has moved on, but casino legislation is stuck in a Sixties time warp."

"The casino industry values sensible regulation for the benefit of the industry and its customers, but an act which was conceived in the Sixties is out of step with modern society."

Mike Allison, a casino consultant, said: "Since 1968, casinos have developed worldwide. Nearly everybody who has looked at British legislation has said it's really not appropriate for the late 20th century."

"In the provinces, the average spend on the gaming tables per person per visit is in the region of £20. That's the cost of theatre tickets and a bag of chips. It's now a low-cost mainstream entertainment."

"At the moment, overseas visitors laugh at us. It's quite embarrassing."

Legislation was being prepared by the last government, but was lost with the election and the new Labour government has shown no great willingness to push it forward.

A Home Office spokeswoman said: "Certainly the present legislation is old and quite complicated, but overhauling it will require a comprehensive review." She said the Gaming Board, which keeps watch on the industry, thought the law should be looked at.

The industry's long-running gripes were compounded on Tuesday when Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, announced that the top rate of duty payable on casinos' gross gaming yield – the amount left over after gamblers' winnings – would rise to 40 per cent from 33.5 per cent from 1 April, generating an additional £20m for the Treasury.

Alan Goodenough, chief executive of London Clubs International, which attracts much of the lucrative business from overseas visitors, said if the measure had been in force last year, it would have paid 60 per cent of the extra duty.

"We shall be pressing as strongly as possible to persuade the Government that this is a mistake and should be reversed," he said.

The chips are down?

- There are 116 casinos in the UK including 21 in London.
- The industry is worth more than £2.3 bn a year.
- It will pay more than £100m a year gaming duty following Tuesday's increase.
- Nearly 11 million people a year go to a casino.
- The average spend outside London is £20. In London, there are a handful of people who will spend hundreds of thousands.
- Outside London, 65 per cent of players are men and 35 per cent women.
- Until last year, you could gamble until the early hours but drinking had to stop at normal pub closing time.

have between 100 and 500, and the large Las Vegas venues as many as 5,000. As much as three-quarters of revenue can come from the machines.

Other problems they cite include the ban on advertising of any sort and the requirement that members should register in person 24 hours in advance of being allowed to play.

The casinos want to be able to place limited advertising in local newspapers and would-be members to be able to apply by post and then bring identification to the casino for confirmation. Membership of one casino should entitle the use of another one in the same group, the casinos say.

The proposals have the backing of, among others, the British Tourist Authority, which would like to include details of casinos in its guides.

The rules on gambling have been virtually unchanged since



A number of grievances: Casinos want more gaming machines, permission to advertise and a relaxation of membership rules

Boy, 2, killed by reversing ice cream van

A TWO-YEAR-OLD boy has died after running out to greet an ice cream van and being knocked down as it reversed.

Liam Fuller, from Coventry, West Midlands, heard the van's jingle as he played with a football in a relative's front garden on Thursday, opened the gate and ran into the road.

He was taken to Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital but died of head injuries shortly after admission.

Liam's mother Michaela Fuller, 27, yesterday described the moment she heard he had been involved in an accident.

"Someone told me he was in hospital and I just burst into tears," she said. "He is my only son."

"I got together his little pyjamas and took them to the emergency ward but it was all too late."

"He was a cheeky little chap but so beautiful. My world has fallen apart."

Michaela's partner Jason King, 24, said: "We will miss him so much."

Liam's aunt, Miss Sheila King, said Liam was playing football in another aunt's front garden in the Wood End area of Coventry when he heard the ice cream van.

"He kicked the football away, unlatched the gate and went to greet the van."

"His aunt only let him out of her sight for a minute but when she looked out she saw him lying under the van."

"She blames herself. This is an absolute tragedy."

Linda Taylor, 34, who was

near the scene of the accident, said a crowd of children had run towards the van as it approached, and they had all wanted to be at the head of the queue.

"The first thing I heard was someone shouting and I thought they were shouting at the children to calm down."

"I came out of the house and I saw little Liam lying there."

"I turned him on his side and felt his pulse and then put a towel over him to keep him warm."

Ms Taylor said Liam had been staying with his aunt, Kerry Fuller, and added: "Kerry was kneeling. She was hysterical, just in floods of tears. She was desperate for Liam to survive."

Mary King, 51, the boy's grandmother, said Liam was a mischievous but lovely little boy who loved the Teletubbies.

"He had Teletubbies bed-sheets, Teletubbies curtains and Teletubbies clothes. I can't believe he's been taken away from us."

Miss King said the child had been warned about running into the road when he heard ice cream vans coming.

"He just loved lollipops and ice creams so much and would jump for joy when he heard the ice cream jingle," she said.

"We had told him before never to run into the road but this time he couldn't help himself."

West Midlands police are investigating the incident and are appealing for witnesses.

The driver of the ice cream van has not been named.

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Hague burns bridges in tirade against euro

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

WILLIAM HAGUE yet again hardened his opposition to a European single currency, suggesting that Britain's economic cycle might "never" get into gear with the rest of Europe.

But in a speech that drew upon every conceivable argument against the currency, the Conservative leader also warned that the euro could whip up the same kind of "full-blown banking and financial crisis" that had hit South East Asia.

"Don't let anyone tell you that it couldn't happen here," Mr Hague told a conference of the Federation of Small Businesses at Kenilworth, Warwickshire. "Few people foresaw the collapse of the Asian tigers."

Mr Hague also gave notice that the Conservatives will oppose the Working Families Tax Credit, which is designed to ease the poverty and unemployment traps, and provide help for parents with childcare costs, when it is fully introduced in April 2000.

The credit offers working families a guaranteed income of at least £180 a week, with full-time earnings of £100, and will ensure that families earning less than £220 a week - half the average male earnings - will pay no income tax.

But it was the section of his speech on the single currency that will cause the greatest tensions within his own party, with pro-Europeans fearing yet more Tory warfare on the eve of next year's European parliamentary elections.

Mr Hague repeated the formula that the Tories would oppose joining the single currency before and at the next election - an effective ten-year embargo - but he went on to suggest such strenuous hostility that he appeared to be burning all bridges.

Opening the euro section of his speech with an attack on the policies of both Margaret Thatcher and John Major, he said: "The best policy for small business is a sound policy for the economy that avoids unsustainable booms, which inevitably cause deep recession. There is no question that the last 18 months and early 1990s."

With Nigel Lawson as Chancellor, they had shadowed the German mark; with Mr Major, they had joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism. "Never again do I want to apologise for failing businesses, high interest rates and soaring unemployment because we joined a European political project when the time was not right," Mr Hague said.

As for the question of whether it would ever be right for Britain to join the single currency - "the ERM set in stone", with no escape route - Mr Hague again suggested the

word "never". He said that far and away the most important condition of suitability for entry was "that our economic cycle should be the same as Europe's. This has not happened in the last 25 years. It is quite possible that it never will ..."

"But unless it is met, the euro could lead to huge booms and deep recession. For us in Britain it could make the ERM look like economic bliss because the euro could lead to prolonged and deep recession with no exit."

He said the fundamental weakness of the euro was that it had a one-size interest rate, that could not be varied to suit the different conditions of different member states.

"The same interest rate needed to coax Germany and France out of recession is the interest rate to curb a boom elsewhere. With the euro, the only option left to rein in a runaway economy is massive tax increases."

"If Britain joined a single currency, huge tax increases might be required at some point to stop the economy spinning out of control," he said.

And in a clear look on his own future room for manoeuvre, Mr Hague added: "It is extraordinary that given Britain's uniformly unhappy experience of fixed exchange rates, that the Government now wants to join the most extreme form of fixed exchange rate ever invented."



Moving on: Tony Blair (left) and the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, after their meeting in Bonn yesterday

Photograph: Michael Jung

Blair beams in on German poll

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

"We haven't got a Tony Blair," growled Chancellor Helmut Kohl, casting a furtive glance at the Prime Minister sitting next to him. Germany did not have foreign investments either, Mr Kohl admitted before proceeding to lavish praise on the economic policies of his guest.

Throughout the press conference, he barely managed a smile. This was clearly a difficult day for the Chancellor, inviting as it did unfavourable comparisons between himself and his challenger, Gerhard

Schröder, who is certainly not offended by being cast in the Blairite mould. "With our very high taxes we are frightening away foreign investors," said Mr Kohl, as if forgetting he has been in charge of tax affairs for 15 years. But if he was trying to make an electoral point, he missed the opportunity.

The only meeting the German media cared about was that between Mr Blair and his German imitator. However hard the British camp tried to stay out of the election battle, Mr Schröder suckered them into it. Hearing of the visit, the Chancellor's challenger in this year's elec-

tions invited himself and colleagues for a meeting and the inevitable photo-op. On the stairs of the British ambassador's residence, Mr Schröder proved he could grin with the best. Thus, unlike his rival, he turned the mini-event into an important stage on the campaign trail. Mr Blair, he said with a broad smile, was "an unusually nice man. I have rarely met a person who can speak with such authority on social and economic affairs."

The two had "thorough discussions" about British ideas for reducing unemployment, and Mr Schröder's recipe for closer

ties with business. "We both agree it makes more sense to finance work than unemployment," Mr Schröder added.

Whether any such agreement was reached, the other side would not say. But on a visit evidently short of content, Mr Schröder's embrace of the Briton he hopes to emulate will be the enduring image.

Mr Blair was in Bonn for a day to discuss the most burning European issues, and appears to have made little progress. The British presidency, he said, would play a "fully constructive part in launching the euro. Our position is open," he said,

and this "allows us to chair discussions in an impartial way". One of the main outstanding questions is who should run the European Central Bank.

The job is up for grabs between Wim Duisenberg, the Dutchman favoured by Germany, and France's Jean-Claude Trichet. Mr Blair is trying to broker a deal, so far without any apparent success. "I am quite optimistic that we'll find a positive solution," was all Mr Kohl would say yesterday. Next week the Prime Minister flies to Paris laden with German optimism and little else.

Praise for Budget 'masterstroke'

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

HERR BLAIR mania has hit Germany, according to the Whitehall machine, which yesterday issued a Foreign Office telegram showing enthusiastic German press reaction to the Budget.

But one of the Prime Minister's spokesmen then capped the diplomatic cable with news of the political programme to be put to the German SPD's party conference, next month.

According to Blair's man in London, the programme includes such plagiarist political gems as: "Our goal is a stakeholder society; calls for cuts in corporation tax, and increases in child benefit; welfare to

work, with carrot-and-stick inducements to get people into jobs or training; and on law and order, the German equivalent of, "Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime."

The "unclassified" FCO telegram on German press reactions to the Budget could not have been more supportive, citing strong praise in both the heavyweight and popular press.

It said that the popular *Bild* Zeitung had given the Budget a prominent factual article and the paper's main editorial, headlined "Great!", said: "Britain was in the lead when industrialisation began. Germany took a hundred years to catch up. Now the British are dashing away again. Let's hope we will not be left far behind."

The cable says: "Neue Zürcher Zeitung [widely read in Germany] describes the budget as a 'British masterstroke' - which leaves little ground for opposition attacks." *Frankfurter Rundschau* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* [both leading liberal dailies] praise in particular the measures which the Chancellor has taken to reform the social welfare state and encourage people to take low-paid jobs.

The Bonn embassy also reports that *Handelsblatt* - the "FT equivalent" - described the Budget as a complete success, saying, in essence, "The reforms to the welfare state mark a clear break with Thatcherism, but the Budget is also enterprise-friendly."

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Roddick sows seeds of dissent



Seed capital: Anita Roddick, the Body Shop founder, who yesterday launched skin care products made from hemp

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE Body Shop yesterday launched a new range of products made from *Cannabis Sativa*, or industrial hemp, and immediately came under attack from the campaigners who embarrassed McDonald's last year in England's longest libel case.

Dave Morris, one of the "McLibel" two, will today lead a picket on the Body Shop's Oxford Street store in London, handing out leaflets accusing Anita Roddick's shops of damaging the environment and the world's poor, despite the company's claims to the contrary.

He and other members of the London Greenpeace anarchist group, an independent organisation not connected with the international environmental campaign, claim that Body Shop is an example of "green consumerism" which is no better than other consumerism.

The leaflet, headed "What's wrong with the Body Shop," says: "The world's problems will only be tackled by curbing such consumerism - one of the fundamental causes of world poverty, environmental destruction and

social alienation." It also airs criticisms about the "naturalness" of Body Shop products, its animal testing policy and its attitudes to trade unions.

A spokeswoman yesterday dismissed the accusations, which she said were first made four years ago and had already been rebutted. "While we are not the perfect company, we don't test on animals, we do trade beneficially with indigenous peoples, we act to limit environmental impact and we respect the human rights of our staff," she said.

Earlier, Ms Roddick, the founder of the company, was accused of "making a joke of drug-taking" as she handed out cannabis seeds to launch the new range of moisturising products made from hemp.

Ann Widdecombe, a former Home Office minister, said Ms Roddick was being "wholly irresponsible" by introducing the products because they are made from the *Cannabis Sativa* plant.

In reply, Ms Roddick said: "With all the current problems our farmers face I'd expect political leaders like you to support hemp-growing."

Ms Roddick handed out the seeds but warned that anyone planting them would be breaking the law and could be arrested. It can be grown only with a licence from the Home Office.

The industrial hemp plant contains only a fraction of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, but the two plants are from the same family and growing hemp could lead to prosecution under the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act.

However, the seed packets come with the warning: "Do not attempt to use the plant as a narcotic. You would need to smoke a joint the size of a telephone pole to get high."

Hemp was one of the most environmentally friendly, easily grown and versatile natural products, Ms Roddick said, but it had been the subject of a smear campaign because of its association with the drugs culture. "Ignorance confuses hemp with marijuana, a member of the same plant genus."

She added that she would be backing British growers for more freedom to cultivate the product and for more European subsidy.

Prison officers at Scrubs accused of revenge threats

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

SEVERAL of the inmates who accused jail staff at Wormwood Scrubs of brutal beatings have been threatened by prison officers in the past few days, it was claimed yesterday.

The number of former and serving prisoners who have complained of systematic violence against them has also doubled to more than 20, and the names of a further dozen have been given to solicitors. About 20 named prison officers have been accused of attacks and racist abuse.

The law firm which presented a dossier of complaints that provoked an official inquiry into the allegations said yesterday that some of the inmates still at the west London jail had told them that prison staff were intimidating them.

A spokeswoman for the solicitors Hickman and Rose said: "They are veiled threats, they are not being blatant and saying inmates will be beaten. Fingers are being pointed at our clients for completing the dossier."

She added: "We are con-

cerned because it is very easy for prison officers to discover who has made the complaints against them."

Nick Flynn, deputy director of the Prison Reform Trust, the penal reform group, which has been working with the law firm, said: "Some of the prisoners involved have not been moved from the Scrubs and we are concerned that they are being intimidated."

Mr Flynn argued that a full judicial inquiry should be held into the allegations and the failure to uphold any complaints against officers.

He said: "Fingers need to be pointed at the internal work of the complaints system and the work of the Board of Visitors. 'I think it's a failure of the internal watchdog and monitoring system if allegations have been made for several years and prisoners have been walking round with visible signs of abuse and black prisoners have been victims of abuse, it's a huge indictment of the complaints and monitoring system.'

"Because the entire system has failed so badly there's a good argument that this should go to a judicial inquiry."

Mr Flynn added that accused officers should either be suspended or moved from the jail during the inquiry.

The new allegations of intimidation came as Peter Atherton, a former governor of maximum-security Long Lartin jail in Worcestershire, was named as the man in charge of the Prison Service inquiry into the Wormwood Scrubs allegations.

The inquiry team is expected to produce an interim report by the end of the month.

Fresh ammunition to support the prisoners' allegations was provided on Thursday when the jail's Board of Visitors published its annual report highlighting concerns about reports of brutal treatment being meted out to inmates.

The union representing prison officers has attacked the way the inquiry is proceeding arguing that so far no evidence has been produced to back up the allegations.

They are also concerned that prisoners who bear officers a grudge will use the current controversy to make false accusations with the hope of gaining compensation.

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Car crash left salesman 'too nice' to do the job

A SALESMAN'S damages award was more than doubled to £320,000 yesterday because although a road accident made him "a better person", he lost the aggression necessary for his job.

Charles Cornell suffered serious brain injuries in the accident on the M11 in Essex in 1991 which left him "a more pleasant personality", said Lord Justice Stuart Smith in the Court of Appeal.

But although friends and relatives thought the change was "for the better", his "less aggressive" manner robbed him of his thrusting nature and he was described as "unemployable" in a "reputable sales force".

He had been awarded

£156,143 damages by a High Court judge in January 1996.

But because the defendant had paid £175,000 into court to settle the case, Mr Cornell would have ended with nothing because he faced paying all the legal bills under court rules.

Three appeal judges increased his award after finding that he should have been given

£220,000 for future loss of earnings which took into account the problems he faced in finding jobs.

The judges had heard that a clinical psychologist, Dr Graham Powell, who examined Mr Cornell, of south-west London, found that he was now only capable of "muddling through life" and his future employment

prospects were "very uncertain indeed".

Mr Cornell, 31, was injured when a car being driven by his insurance business partner, Robert Green, left the motorway and ploughed into a field.

He suffered multiple injuries, including damage to the frontal lobes of his brain which impaired his IQ, caused inter-

mittent memory loss and lowered his ability to concentrate.

The judges cut his award for injury, pain and suffering from £87,500 to £60,000, but increased the £30,000 he was awarded for future loss of earnings.

Lord Justice Stuart Smith said Mr Cornell - an Old Harrovian who gained two A-levels

when he was 16 - had been described as "bumping along at the bottom of the market" since the accident and was now unemployed.

He had lost the aggression, concentration and thrusting nature necessary for a successful insurance salesman and could no longer compete in the market place. His skills had been

lost at the outset of a career which had looked bright. He had been voted one of the most successful salesmen in the insurance market with "flair, stamina and a capacity for hard work".

The judge said the accident had taken away his "competitive edge" and he often fell asleep in the afternoons - a situation "few employers would tolerate".



Taken as red: The samizdat version of the Morning Star produced by striking journalists

'Star' row threatens endangered species

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

FIRST it was called the *Daily Worker*, then the *Morning Star* and now it has re-emerged, if briefly, as *The Workers' Morning Star*. Yesterday striking journalists at the paper made an uncomradely two-fingered gesture at their management by publishing a samizdat version.

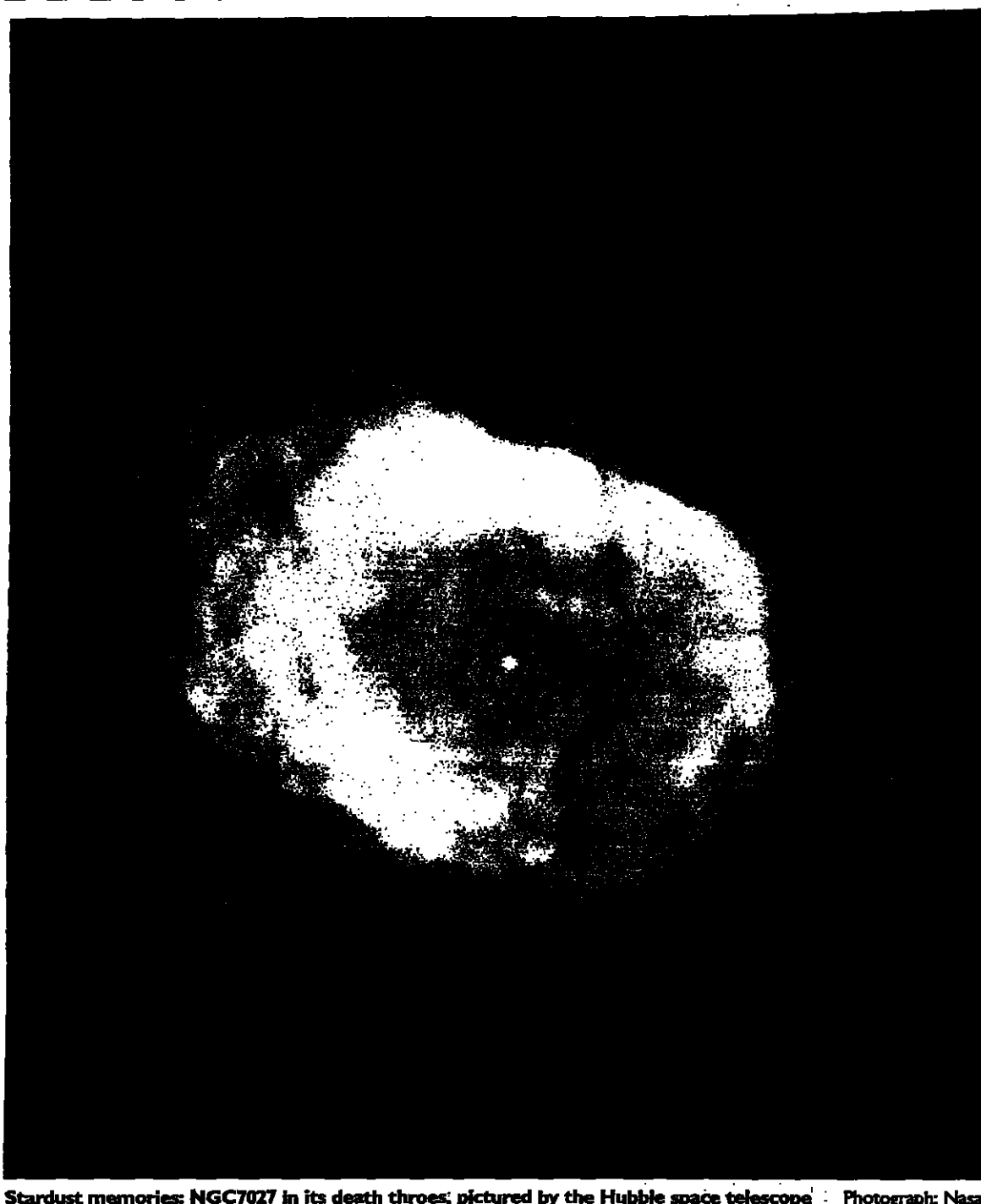
The *Morning Star* proper has been off the streets for three weeks because of a walkout over the suspension and subsequent dismissal of John Haylett, the editor. Strikers have published two other small A3 substitutes for the *Star* but yesterday they produced an eight-page tabloid version. Habitual readers will find it ironic that staff introduced the adjective "Workers" into the masthead, given that the *Star* was always supposed to have been produced for the pro-

letariat by the proletariat. The stoppage threatens the very existence of the last Communist daily in the English-speaking world. Managers and representatives of the National Union of Journalists met yesterday at the Acas conciliation service to try to resolve the dispute. Last weekend Mr Haylett appealed to the paper's management committee, but his attempt to win reinstatement failed.

But the *Star*'s controlling committee put him back on the payroll, which means he will be drawing £10,500 a year, the sum paid to all staff members. Talks yesterday were aimed at drawing up the terms of reference of a special appeals committee and deciding who should sit on it. Mr Haylett has been accused of "gross industrial misconduct", partly for unauthorised use of the office computer sys-

tem. NUJ members say the charge is "trumped up" and accuse Mary Rosser, chief executive, of nepotism for promoting her son-in-law from deputy editor to editor in place of Mr Haylett.

The conflict began because of clash of personalities but is in danger of escalating into the kind of vicious political war beloved of the left. Management accuses strikers of copying up to Arthur Scargill and his Socialist Labour Party, while in reply, journalists are levelling an allegation which for a Communist is the final insult. Pickets which attend daily outside the *Star*'s offices in Hackney, east London, say their bosses are becoming too friendly with the Socialist Action group, an organisation associated with Trotsky, or the Great Beezbeeb as he is known to orthodox Marxist-Leninists.



Stardust memories: NGC 7027 in its death throes, pictured by the Hubble space telescope. Photograph: Nasa

Dying star provides nursery for new suns

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

THE DEATH of our Sun is probably going to look like this, five billion years or so from now: the moment when the hydrogen and helium from its core are thrown off into interstellar space, where they can create a new generation of stars.

This picture, captured by the Hubble space telescope, is actually of a star called NGC 7027, which is 3,000 light-years away in the direction of the constellation Cygnus. It is in the stage known as a "planetary nebula" - because viewed by small telescopes, such cosmic explosions looked like the disc of a planet.

When a star starts to die, the nuclear fuel at its heart runs out and a very dense, cool shell of hydrogen molecules is deposited around the star, far into space. The human eye cannot see this shell, but Hubble's infrared camera can. In the picture, the actual star is the intense white dot, while the shell of hydrogen atoms appears as the red wisps surrounding it; the white wisps are stellar dust. The actual distance between the star's surface and the shell is roughly 1.2 billion miles.

In a period lasting about 1,000 years, the molecular shell is atomized, and the resulting atoms are flung into space by a "solar wind" from the star. Meanwhile the matter thrown off will form the most primitive building blocks for other stars, planets - and any life that may form on them.



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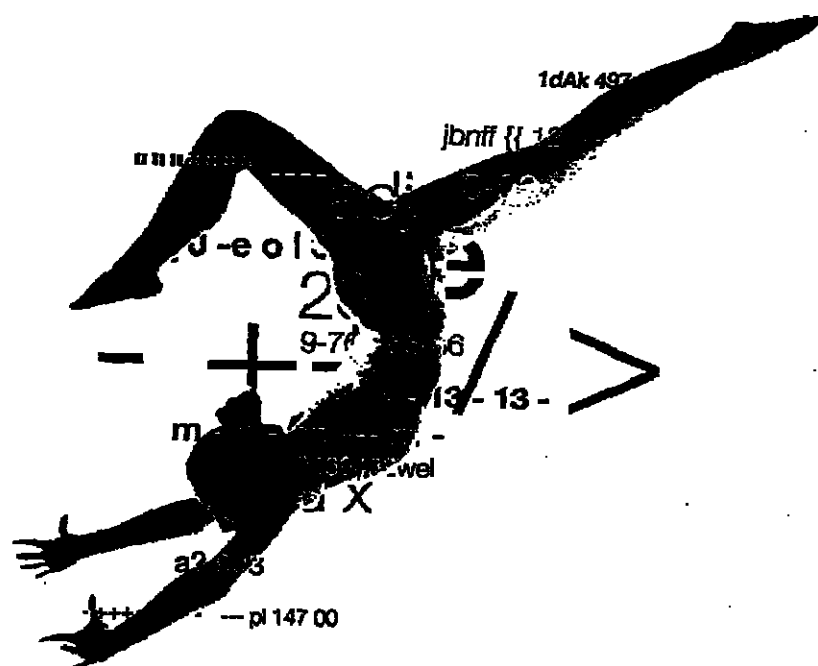
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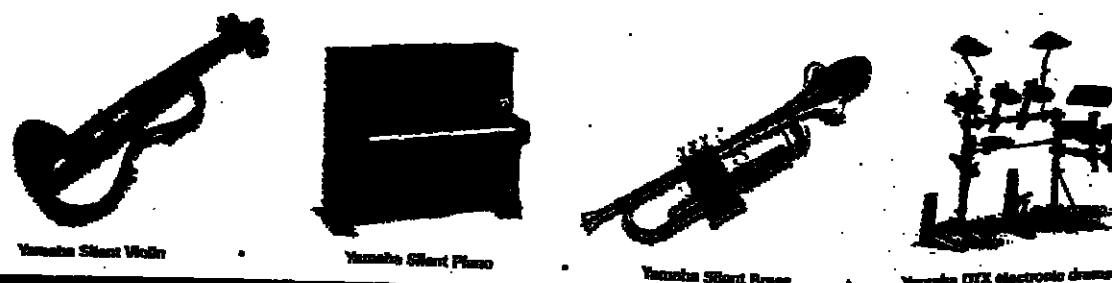
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Sit-in: A protester surrounded by police during a demonstration against a train carrying nuclear waste to Ahaus, north Germany

Photograph: AP

Running battle over nuclear waste train

By Imre Karas
in Bonn

A 30,000-STRONG police force used water cannons to secure the route of a train carrying nuclear waste which was due to arrive in the north-German town of Ahaus last night.

Protesters had chained themselves to the tracks and one policeman died after being accidentally run over by a locomotive as the annual confrontation between environmentalists and the nuclear industry approached its climax.

The train, carrying six containers of spent nuclear fuel from power plants in southern Germany, had to thread its way past thousands of demonstrators. The destination of the 300-mile journey was the storage site near Ahaus, a small Münsterland market town near the Dutch border.

Singing protest songs, protesters chained themselves

to the tracks, undermined roads and occupied intersections. In some instances, police dragged them away one by one. In the centre of Ahaus, police used batons to break up a smaller demonstration.

"It's just chaos," said Andre Obermeier, a spokesman from Ahaus anti-nuclear group. "It just shows how pointless the shipment is, how unnecessary - they could have stored it in the power plants where it came from for years."

Anti-nuclear groups estimated that about 5,000 protesters had pitched tents in the vicinity of Ahaus, considerably fewer than expected. The authorities had wrong-footed organisers by setting the convoy off several days earlier than advertised. Thousands of environmentalists were racing across Germany yesterday to catch up.

Wolfgang Clement, state premier-designate of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Social

Democrat-controlled state in which Ahaus is located, called the shipments a provocation and "irresponsible madness".

Activists say the waste containers are not leakproof and the cargo could cause an environmental disaster. They complain that the waste will sit indefinitely at the temporary site, as Germany has no plans yet for permanent storage.

Three previous nuclear waste transports since 1995, all to another temporary site in Gorleben, were hampered by fierce protests.

The latest cargo was brought on separate trains from nuclear power plants in the southern towns of Gundremmingen and Neckarwestheim for assembly at Walheim. In Neckarwestheim, hundreds of demonstrators staged a sit-in on Thursday blocking the power-plant entrance. Police in riot gear picked up the demonstrators and moved them away.

Greek bad boys clean up their EU image

By Rupert Cornwell

A 14 PER CENT devaluation of the currency is perhaps an unusual way of proving one's credentials. But by drastically lowering the parity of the drachma last weekend and vowing to join the single currency by 2001, Greece is starting to shed its reputation as the European Union's problem child.

Devaluation should place the previously overvalued drachma on an even keel for the required two-year participation in the exchange rate mechanism before membership of monetary union proper. And if the country can weather an immediate upward blip in prices, it is on course to meet the Maastricht criteria, if not this year then in 1999. Inflation is 4 per cent and falling, and the budget deficit is within hailing distance of the Maastricht ceiling of 3 per cent.

The repercussions of the drachma's entry into the ERM are unclear. In one sense, it further isolates Britain, along with Sweden and Norway, as grumpy Northern hold-outs against monetary union. But it is equally possible that the presence of another devaluation-prone country in Emu may reinforce doubts in Germany and its traditional hard-currency satellites about the wisdom of the enterprise. It is beyond argument, however, that it underlines the commitment to Europe of prime minister Costas Simitis, and his foreign minister, Theodore Pangalos.

"Europe is the main focus of Greek foreign policy," Mr Pangalos declared this week - an assertion that might sound strange to those schooled in the anti-European rhetoric of the former Socialist prime minister Andreas Papandreu, and the

endless diplomatic warfare with Turkey that has made most of Europe rue the day in 1981 when Greece joined the then EEC.

The obsession with Turkey - on display again last weekend at Edinburgh when the EU agreed a compromise to permit the opening of negotiations with Cyprus - can still infuriate. "Pangalos is fine, very clever and very European," one of his colleagues remarked privately. "But then Turkey comes up, and it's like pressing a button."

Nothing grates more in Brussels than Greek use of its veto to advance the country's cause against Turkey, most lately its refusal to sanction a financial package for Ankara after the dispute over the Aegean island of Imia. The EU's failure to honour that commitment, as well as the continuing refusal to admit Turkey for membership, are the prime reasons for today's crisis between Ankara and the EU - a crisis into which it has been in part dragged by Greek membership.

But in other respects, Greece is a reformed creature. Emu entry is but the most vivid symbol of Mr Simitis's determination to modernise the economy, 60 per cent of which is in state hands. And unlike Mr Papandreu, he no longer plays with fire in the Balkans.

Athens has realised that with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, it has become a major regional economic power with a GDP larger than the other Balkan countries combined. Greece may import goods from the EU, but the Balkans and Eastern Europe are good export markets. "There are economic reasons for us to work for peace," Mr Pangalos said.

Ailing Yeltsin reappears

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin made a brief and unexpected visit to the Kremlin yesterday after a week-long illness, working on plans for a summit next week with the French and German leaders. The venue for the summit, which had been planned for the Urals city of Yekaterinburg, was moved to Moscow, raising more questions about the President's health.

— AP, Moscow

Exile rings the changes

THE EXILED Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam denied a report that he had arranged to move to North Korea in anticipation of an end to Robert Mugabe's rule in Zimbabwe. Mr Mugabe faces a party revolt after a prominent MP called for his ousting. Mr Mengistu denied reports that his exile cost Zimbabwean taxpayers \$250m (£1.8m), including a huge bill for phone calls that Mr Mugabe's office had paid.

— AP, Harare

Amnesty condemns Nigeria

AMNESTY International said arrests and beatings in Nigeria had continued "shamelessly" right up to the Pope's visit this week-end. The Pope is to hold an open-air Mass and meet the head of state, General Sani Abacha, on his visit to Nigeria, scheduled for the beatification of a Nigerian monk.

— Reuters, London

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Castro grabs the cameras to show delight at US move

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

IN A remarkable turnaround for one of the most prickly foreign policy relationships in the world, the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, responded immediately and with warmth to news from Washington that economic sanctions were to be eased. Even before the formal announcement had been made by the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, yesterday, Mr Castro appeared before the cameras of the global news network, CNN, to describe the changes as "really positive".

US officials had let it be known the previous day that an announcement was imminent on a relaxation of policy towards Cuba. It was expected to include the resumption of direct flights between the US and Cuba, an increase in the amount of medicine and pharmaceutical supplies provided to humanitarian organisations in Cuba, and permission for Cuban exiles in the US to remit a limited amount of money - up to \$1,200 (£725) annually - to relatives in Cuba.

In his response, Mr Castro said the changes would help improve relations between the US and Cuba and pledged Cuba would do its part

to make things better. He stressed, though, that Havana would not abandon the one-party system, and said he wanted to see full details of the announcement before giving a full assessment.

Cuba's foreign minister, Roberto Robaina, who was in Geneva, appeared out of line with the new tone. He dismissed the US moves as "crumbs" and part of a political manoeuvre that Cuba could not accept.

Explaining the policy shift in advance, US officials said the decision reflected broad consultation on Cuba policy on the part of the US administration and the positive results of the recent visit to Cuba by the Pope. They stressed that the policy shift was in recognition of the greater "space" allowed to opponents of Fidel Castro's communist regime in the wake of the Pope's visit, and designed to assist people without assisting the regime.

Their comments also made clear, however, that while the economic embargo would remain in force, Washington was no longer aiming to use political and economic isolation to topple Mr Castro. This detail that may explain the Cuban leader's positive response.

In one respect, the policy changes return the situation to what it was two

years ago, before Cuba shot down two small planes piloted by Cuban exiles. In others - the increase in medical supplies, and possible sales of food - they go further, and open the way for an eventual relaxation of the economic embargo. A softening of US policy also makes it less likely Washington will apply the Helms-Burton law - which threatens sanctions against third countries and individuals that do business with Cuba. This would remove a source of tension in Washington's relations with European countries and Canada.

Domestic reaction in the US was divided, illustrating the sensitivity of any change in US Cuba policy. The large and vocal Cuban exile community in Florida was split between groups pleased that maintaining ties with relatives would be easier, and those objecting that the memory of the four dead pilots was being dishonoured.

There was strong opposition, too, from the chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee, Jesse Helms, and two Cuban-born congressmen from Florida. Among other things, they questioned whether Mr Clinton had the authority to reinstate direct flights to Cuba, for instance, that had been legislated by Congress.



Natalie Ungvari after testifying on Thursday about Monica Lewinsky's alleged affair with Bill Clinton Photograph: AP Photo/Dennis Cook

Clinton holds back from rubbishing accusers

By Mary Dejevsky
Washington

AS ALL Washington anticipated yesterday's opening of *Primary Colours*, the satirical film loosely based on Bill Clinton's campaign for the presidency, the pace of the real-life White House drama accelerated with the hounding of more accusations and the release of more documents. Mr Clinton, however, unlike his cinematic counterpart, appeared wary of taking the gloves right off lest he damage his cause.

While his defence lawyer in the sexual harassment suit brought by Paula Jones was set to publish papers in support of his argument that the case should be dropped for lack of evidence, the White House was denying anything too sensitive or salacious would be produced. It was denied that the

lawyer, Robert Bennett, would disclose details of Ms Jones's sexual history - a controversial move that risked undercutting Mr Clinton's standing with women's groups.

The papers to be made public included transcripts of cross-examinations conducted by Mr Bennett last year on some of Mr Clinton's accusers, including Ms Jones herself, and Kathleen Willey, the former White House volunteer who claimed on television last Sunday that Mr Clinton had kissed and groped her against her will. Mr Bennett says the women's answers cast doubt on the truth of their allegations.

By making the material public, at the same time as submitting it to the judge, Mr Bennett clearly hoped to counter the impact on public opinion of Ms Willey's television interview and of the 700 pages of documents made public a week before by

Ms Jones's lawyers. The documents included large sections of Ms Willey's account of her 1993 encounter with Mr Clinton and passages from Mr Clinton's sworn testimony in the case.

This reluctance on the part of the White House to exploit information at its disposal, may reflect a decision to hold back the most damaging material until it is really needed. But it can also be traced back to last year, when Mr Bennett caused an outcry from women's groups by saying that if women other than Paula Jones were called to testify about Mr Clinton's sex life, the private lives of Mr Clinton's accusers would be fair game.

On Thursday, Natalie Ungvari, a schoolfriend of Monica Lewinsky, testified to the grand jury investigating the White House sex scandals. She made no comment afterwards.

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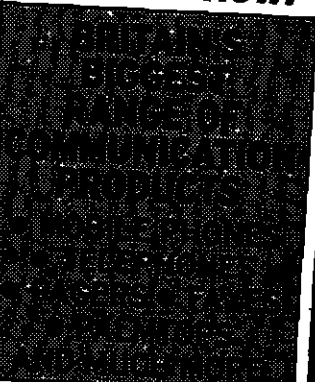
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صوتنا من الامم

Trainspotting and the art of Impressionism

PARIS
DIARY



John Lichfield

Claude Monet was a railway enthusiast. His wonderful painting of the Normandy express at the Gare Saint-Lazare is familiar to visitors to the National Gallery in London. It is one of a series of 11 views painted on the platforms and tracks, and even inside a signal box, at the station in 1877/78.

Seven of these canvases – full of steam and light and movement – have been marshalled for the first time in 120 years in an exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris (which, of course, used to be a railway station itself). The exhibition, which lasts until 17 May and goes on to Washington, is called *Monet, Monet La gare Saint-Lazare*.

Edouard Manet's railway connections are less well-known. The father of Impressionism had a studio on the Rue de Saint-Pétersbourg, overlooking the maze of tracks approaching Saint-Lazare. The poster for the exhibition is his painting *Le Chemin de Fer*. It shows a young woman and a little girl with the station in the background, mostly obscured by a cloud of steam.

The canvas caused something of a scandal when exhibited in 1873. Why should the little girl in a lovely blue dress have her back rudely turned to the artist? Why is she gazing into the steam? The answer is obvious to anyone who, like me, spent their childhood lurking about railway stations. The little girl was an early Gallic trainspotter (somewhat overdressed for the part).



Full steam: Monet's 1877 study of La Gare St Lazare – one of the paintings on show at the Musée d'Orsay

Photograph: Bridgeman Art Library

I have been travelling by train a good deal recently, mostly by TGV, but this week to Strasbourg on one of the last of the French main lines yet to be replaced by purpose-built fast tracks. In Britain, railways have become a shrunken, scruffy and weed-infested affair. Returning to the great junction at Crewe is like visiting an old friend dying of some wasting disease.

In France, on the old main lines, nothing seems to have changed. Every small station still has a goods yard; every big

station has a satisfying jumble of criss-crossing rails; in the depths of the countryside, smart-looking branch lines set off into the unknown. This is no illusion. The SNCF still has more than 20,000 miles of operating railways: a total rivalled only by the US, China and India.

The price is, of course, massive public subsidy. Passengers and freight customers pay £3.5bn a year to use the SNCF: the government gives the railways another £8bn a year. The last government planned to

change all that but then took fright. The question of rail reform – ie massive cuts – is theoretically still on the agenda. But the transport minister in the Jospin government is Jean-Claude Gayssot, known to his friends as the "Comrade Minister". He is a Communist, a former railwayman and a former rail union official. No sudden change is anticipated.

We have, literally, a running battle with the family who live in the flat below. They object to

the sound of our children sprinting over the bare parquet floors. They have a fair point but not one they have ever put to us directly. All complaints are directed through the *gardienne* (concierge), a Bosnian Serb Jehovah's Witness given to wearing cerise sweat-shirts and purple track-suit bottoms. We thought an uneasy truce had been established until the other day, the *gardienne* approached my wife and said: "The people in the flat below were wondering when you will be buying a carpet."

French doctors have a fundamental approach to medicine. The cure for almost everything, it seems, comes in the form of a suppository.

The other day, my wife took Grace, five months old, to our doctor with a bad cough. He prescribed suppositories but added a lecture, with sketched diagram, on how they should be applied. Contrary to common sense, it appears that the blunt end of the suppository should go in first. No wonder the French are hopeless at darts.

Le Pen link has right in chaos

By John Lichfield
in Paris

THE right side of the French political spectrum was plunged into disarray yesterday. Leaders of the moderate right in five regions defied orders from their national headquarters and made tactical alliances with the ultra-right and xenophobic National Front to hold on to regional power.

All five, all members of the UDF centre-right grouping, including Charles Millon, the former defence minister, were immediately suspended by the national leadership. At least two other regional leaders of the Right are expected to accept the backing of Jean-Marie Le Pen's party in delayed votes in their regional assemblies on Monday. The head of one of the more right-wing components of the UDF, Alain Madelin, was said to have congratulated one leading rebel on his actions.

The worst-possible scenario – a U-turn by the national leadership of the traditional right, reversing its moral and strategic rejection of deals with the

Front, predicted that the centre-right of French politics would "explode" next week, with elements of the UDF and Gaullists forming a new party and others joining the Front.

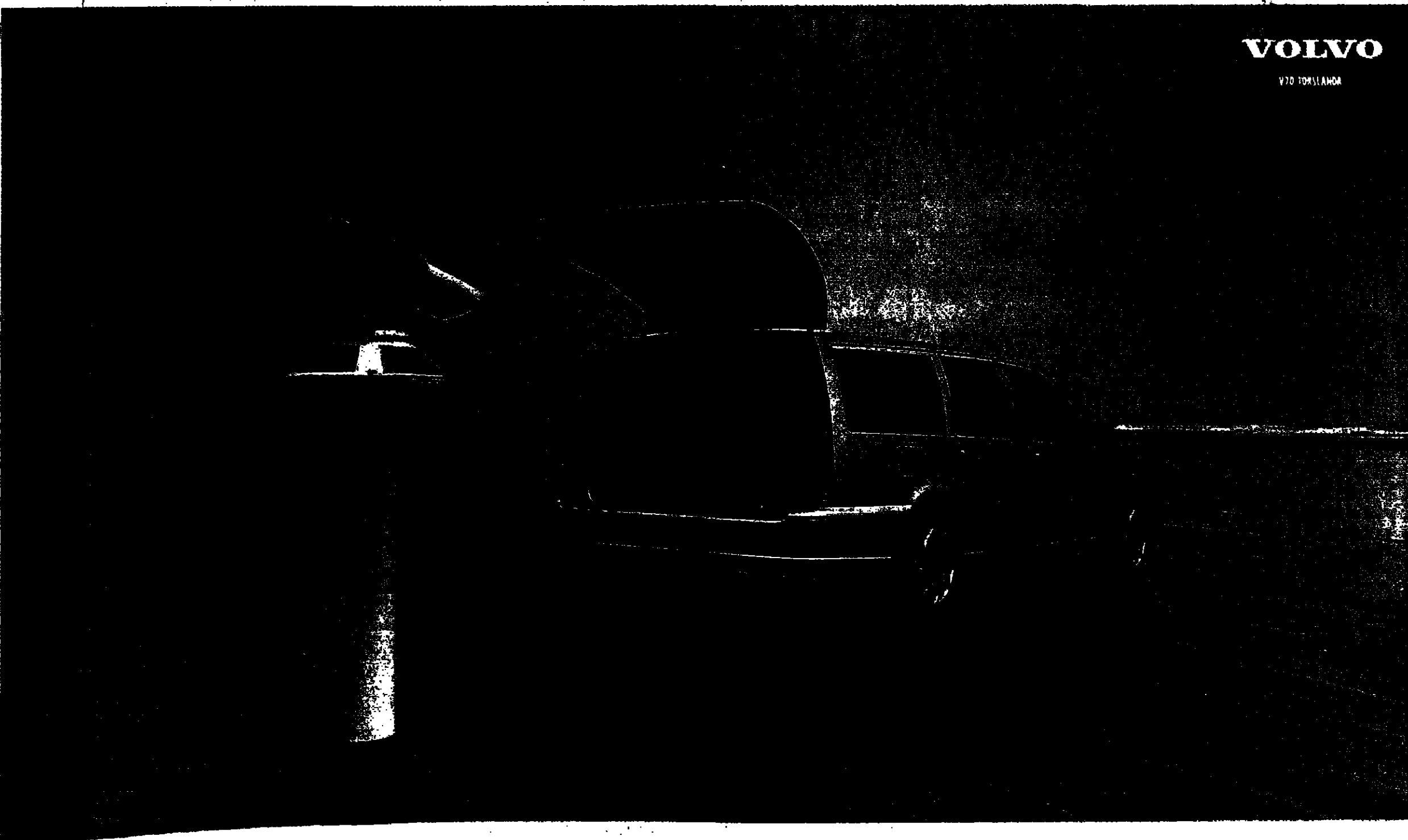
The Socialist former culture minister, Jack Lang, spoke of a "black day for the Republic". He accused the regional politicians who made deals with the Front of "reneging on promises to the people" and "stirring the vile soup offered by the ... neo-fascists".

The crisis on the right follows regional elections last Sunday which produced a confused electoral pattern all over France. The Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin's, left-of-centre coalition topped the poll in 11 out of 21 regions in France. But it won an outright majority in only one.

In at least nine regions, the National Front was left holding the balance of power. The national leadership of the "traditional", or respectable right, pledged beforehand to make deals with the Front and to accept minority left-wing regional governments if necessary.

Once the election results came in, local centre-right leaders all over France, desperate to cling on to regional power after their defeat in national elections last year, began to make secret or open deals with the NF. Despite warnings from the centre-right national leadership, and from Jacques Chirac, the Gaullist President of the Republic, there was widespread revolution when regional assemblies gathered to choose their presidents yesterday.

A breaking of the mould of right-wing politics in France is now possible, with dangerous implications for French democracy.



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Horror hotel has vacancy for a demolition man

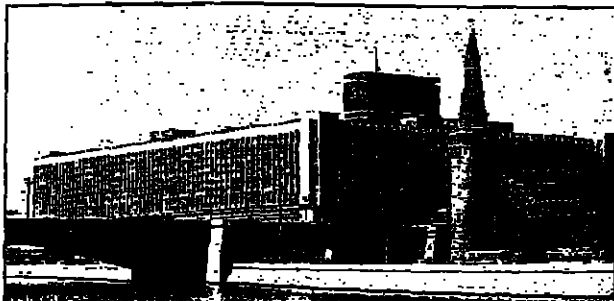
By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

CAN THERE be another building on the planet which is both as monstrously ugly and as unhappily located? For 31 years, the Rossiya Hotel has kept intact its reputation as one of the world's eyesores, a blot on a Moscow landscape that includes such pearls as the Kremlin, Red Square and St Basil's Cathedral. But that bad name may be on the way out.

So monolithic are the vital statistics of this soulless block of glass and concrete that it for years made the record books.

The Rossiya was built by the Soviets as the biggest hotel on earth, a boast it can no longer uphold. It has 3,071 rooms for 5,000 guests and the corridors are of such endless-seeming lengths that Russians jokingly advise visitors to arrive with a compass.

History has not been kind. A fire in 1977 which killed 42 people did not close it. Nor did a plague of rats and cockroaches



Blot on the landscape: Hotel Rossiya, Moscow

in 1994. Nor did the murder in January of its director, Yevgeny Tsimbalistov, who was shot in what appeared to be a Mafia contract killing. He was the fourth hotel executive to be murdered in Moscow in 18 months.

Small wonder that new investors are not always clamouring at the door. But now claims are circulating in the capital about plans for the hotel, which stands only 200 metres from the Kremlin walls.

Just over a year ago, the city announced a scheme to let it to the New York property tycoon

Donald Trump for modernisation. So far that has not materialised. Moscow's city architect, Alexander Kuzmin, has disparagingly described the \$85 (£51) a night hotel (\$50 for Russians) as a "hostel" - a reflection on its decline from one of the USSR's best establishments into seediness.

Plans have been mooted to refurbish it, divide it into four separate hotels, and to lower its highest points, which rise to 12 storeys, obstructing views to the Kremlin. In fact, according to the hotel's spokesman, no

fewer than 120 proposals of various forms have been made. "These are being examined," he said. Equally cagey was the Moscow Association of Hotels. "This is not a simple process. There is an officially adopted concept about the development and reconstruction of the hotel which is signed by the Prime Minister [Viktor Chernomyrdin]. The hotel is supposed to be divided into smaller hotels," explained its spokesman, Anatoly Bulgina.

But "official concepts" have a way of being ignored in Russia. *Kommersant* newspaper recently reported that the search was on for an investor willing to demolish it and build something more appropriate in its place. The newspaper published a front page photograph which "disappeared" the hotel. The resulting cityscape was greatly improved.

Bringing the place down is the difficult bit: building something better, given the ugliness of the place, should be a doddle.

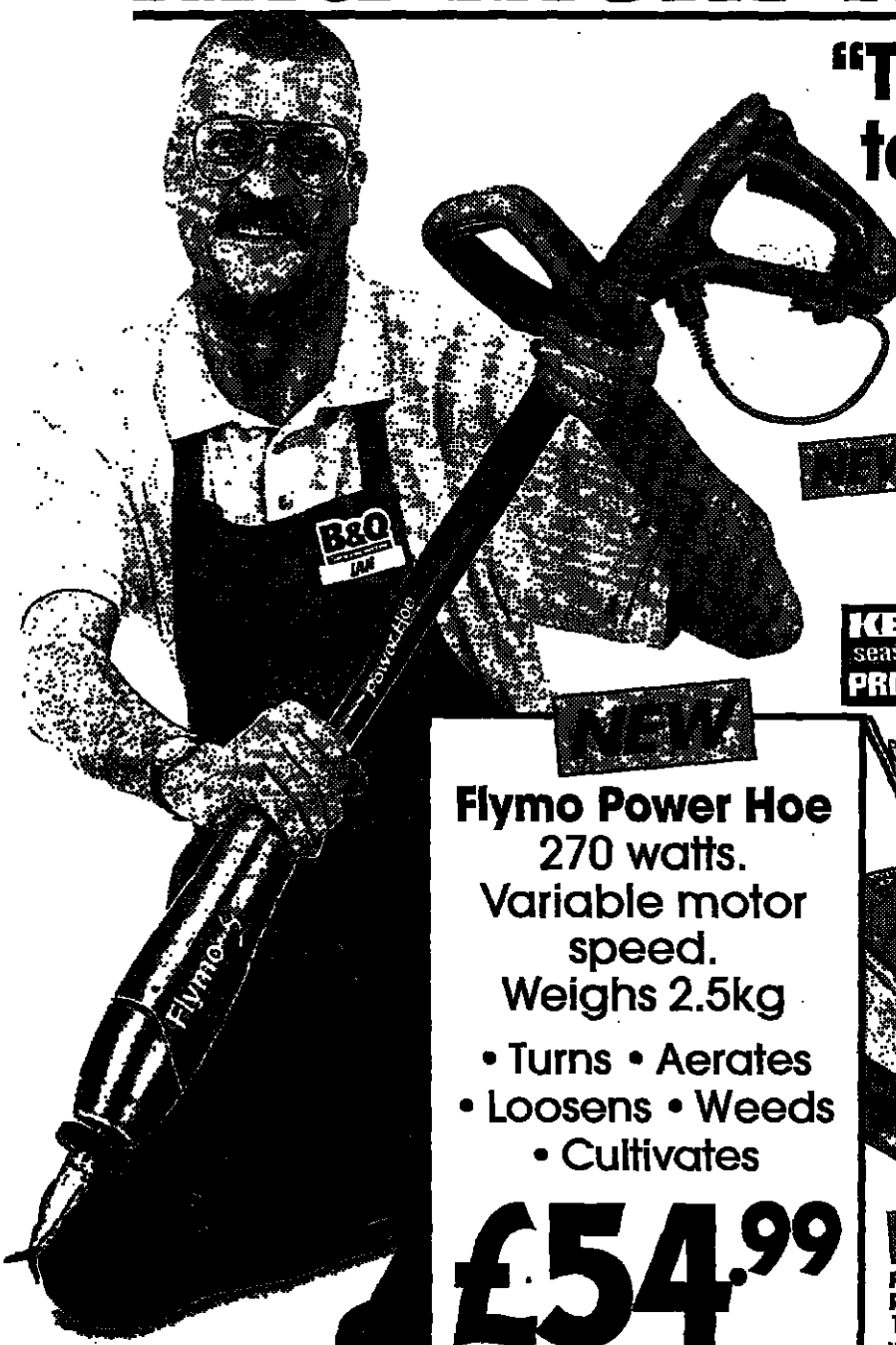


Pride and prejudice: Serbs waving their national flag at a demonstration in Djakovica 50 miles west of Pristina against demands by ethnic Albanians to secede Kosovo province from control by Belgrade Photograph: Darko Vojnovic/AP

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No love lost as Christians battle over cathedral

BLACK ROBES swishing, thousands of Orthodox priests silently marched in a show of strength through the Transylvanian city of Cluj yesterday, where a week ago Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholics exchanged fistbumps in a contested cathedral.

"Are you Orthodox? If so, come with us," an Orthodox priest called out to one of the 1,000 bystanders who had gathered in the centre of the city, 203 miles north-west of the Romanian capital, Bucharest.

The Orthodox priests had come from all over Transylvania for the silent march. Many of them did not make the sign of the cross in front of the cathedral, which one week ago was handed back to Eastern Rite Catholics after 50 years.

Orthodox faithful customarily cross themselves in front of any Christian church.

Eastern Rite Catholics who held a service yesterday shut the cathedral's front doors and said they would not allow any Orthodox inside. They used loudspeakers to broadcast the service into the street.

The tension between the two religious communities dates back to the end of the Second World War, when Romanian Communists suppressed Romanian Christians who professed loyalty to the Vatican and in some cases handed over their buildings to the Orthodox church hierarchy.

The Catholics claim that the Orthodox priests colluded with Communist authorities.

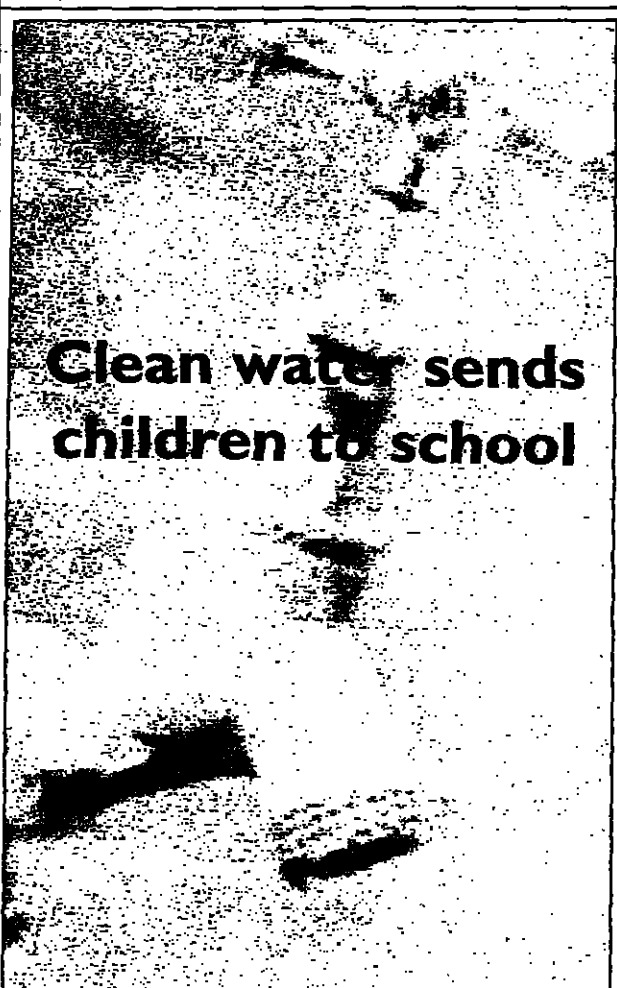
"You should be carrying Stalin's portrait," an old woman, who said she was an Eastern Rite Catholic, called out to the Orthodox priests.

Last week, Romanians were shocked by scenes of Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholics hurling the communion table and other holy objects around Cluj's 16th-century cathedral.

Police yesterday maintained a low-key presence on the march.

"I don't understand these manifestations," said Arpad Pal, an ethnic Hungarian watching the priests march. "Christianity is a religion of love and we should love each other."

—AP Cluj



Clean water sends children to school

On Thursday 26th March 1998 The Independent will be publishing an 8 page report in association with WaterAid about the issues surrounding people's access to clean water and effective sanitation in the developing world.

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THE INDEPENDENT ON SURVIVAL

صوتك من الامم

Annan steps warily into Middle East minefield

By Robert Fisk
in Beirut

FIRST we had the Russians bringing peace to the Middle East in the shape of Victor Possouvalout, special envoy to President Boris Yeltsin. He told us at the Lebanese foreign ministry that Moscow supported UN Security Council Resolution 425, which calls on Israel to withdraw from Lebanon. Then came the hero of Har Homa, our own Robin Cook, who also supported 425, but noted that the Syrians would like Golan back at the same time as the Israelis left Lebanon. Yesterday, the saviour of Baghdad, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, turned up to tell us how much he wanted to see 425 implemented. Within 10 days, it will be the Iranian turn to tell us, in the same marble-corridor foyer of the Beirut foreign ministry, what a jolly good thing 425 is.

Mr Annan – or Mr Kofi as the Lebanese like to call him – is no fool. And while he would like UN resolutions implemented in the Middle East, he knows well that the Syrians are in no mood to see Israel pull out of Lebanon and thus lose the only military pressure they have on the Israelis: the guerrilla war in the south of the country.

Besides, he realises the snakepit of double standards does not permit him to lecture the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the same way that Bill Clinton likes to threaten Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Israel ignores UN resolutions and remains America's protégé in the Middle East; Iraq ignores UN sanctions and gets regularly biffed for doing so.

Mr Annan has, in fact, so well understood the double standards of the area that he spoke with admiration of Washington's lamentable stewardship of the "peace process". In Jordan, he gave US efforts his "full support". In Beirut yesterday, while acknowledging that it had run into

"a number of unforeseen [sic] difficulties", he told us he hoped "that the efforts that the United States is making to push forward the peace process will succeed". Which is odd, since American efforts to dig up the corpse of the Oslo agreement appear to involve little more than mild criticism of Israel's continued settlement-building, fierce Israeli-style demands for the Palestinians to suppress "terrorism", and a refused dinner date for Benjamin Netanyahu with President Clinton (a courtesy Mr Netanyahu extended to Mr Cook this week).

But Mr Annan is, in reality, treading a very gentle path through the Middle East minefield. He can desire the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 425 on Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab land – upon which the "peace process" is supposed to be founded – without condemning Israel for refusing to obey the UN. It was the American-sponsored Oslo agreement that offered the Palestinians a hope of a state – not the UN.

"One thing you can say for Annan is that he knows how to navigate," one of his aides muttered to me amid those marble columns yesterday. Indeed, Captain Kofi is not going to sail his boat into an iceberg. That will be left to Yasser Arafat and Mr Netanyahu and, possibly, Captain Bill Clinton himself. The UN Secretary-General's trip around the Middle East was not a mission with a set of proposals, his men informed us. He wanted to learn, understand, to hear all sides.

Twenty years ago, the Lebanese were demanding that the Israelis obey the UN resolution and withdraw. The Israelis refused. Now the Israelis say they want to withdraw, but the Lebanese – fearful of Syria's anger if Golan was not returned at the same time – want conditions attached to 425. No wonder Mr Annan wants the Americans to carry the can.



Reaching out: Aboriginal performer Djalaparra Murayyarrun inside the 'Sea of Hands' display on Bondi Beach. The display – featuring 120,000 signatures – has travelled Australia as a symbol of support for Aboriginal rights. Photograph: Reuters

Indian guru digs deep to find meaning of life and death

By Peter Popham
in Delhi

FIVE smouldering Bristol cigarettes outside a mound plastered with cement mark the spot where Vilji Bhagat breathed his last.

On 3 March, on the boundary between two remote villages in Gujarat, north-west India, Mr Bhagat climbed down into the hole he and his followers had dug here and he sat in meditation with a coconut balanced on his head. Then his wife and disciples shovelled earth on him until he was buried alive.

Overnight the spot became a place of pilgrimage: green flags honouring Mr Bhagat's patron saint were raised and hundreds of people made the trek by bus and autorickshaw to worship at the grave.

But there were dissenters. A local scientific association, the Saurashtra Science Committee, said the incident was "deplorable, since it encourages superstition in a scientific age". On Wednesday, some 80 volunteers from this and other rationalist groups turned up at the grave, planning to dig up the body. They wanted, they said, to persuade Mr Bhagat's admirers that his suicide had been "a freak and an irresponsible action" to which no religious significance should be ascribed.

There were 2,000 believers at the scene, however, who were in no mood to chop logic, and an ugly clash was averted only when police waded in with bamboo staves.

This corner of India has something of a name for memorable suicides. It was in neighbouring Rajasthan 11 years ago that a woman called Roop Kanwar shocked the nation by committing suicide, allowing herself to be burned alive on her husband's funeral pyre. Sutee has long been illegal, but although the woman's father-in-law and

31 other people were charged with criminal offences, all were acquitted after a 10-year delay.

Three years ago, another man in Gujarat is said to have performed an equally arresting act, "cutting off his head", according to *The Pioneer*, "and offering it to the gods".

An air of mystery surrounds the subject of the latest *samadh*, as such religiously motivated acts of terminal self-effacement are called. He arrived in Delhi Pipaliya five years ago, people say. In his years in the village, he did nothing but carry out "pujas" – religious ceremonies – acquiring a circle of devotees as well as a wife and two sons. He was only 37 at the time of his death.

Police, possibly goaded by the rationalists, have begun proceedings against Mr Bhagat's widow, Vimlaben, and five followers, for aiding and abetting suicide. Mrs Bhagat reacted angrily. "Why are they doing this to us?" she told the *Indian Express*. "We didn't do anything. It was his wish and the whole village accompanied him on his last journey."

"We were there when it all happened – myself, our two sons. There were nearly 300 others." She had learned of her husband's death-wish nearly three years ago. "He knew when he had to die. He used to say he would not live on this earth a moment longer than had been divinely ordained. 'I will know the time when I will be asked to leave this earthly vehicle,' he would say. On his last journey, people were singing. They had come in lorries, on foot. We don't have any sadness or guilt in our hearts. We are happy."

Then she lit five more *Bristols* (the incense of choice in these parts) and sprayed the mound with room freshener. "Only *Bristols* and the most expensive perfume are good enough," she breathed piously.

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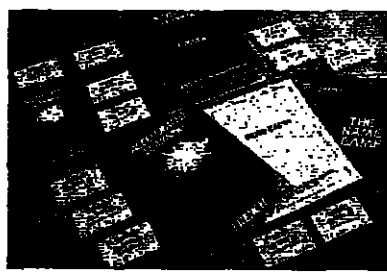
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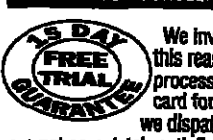
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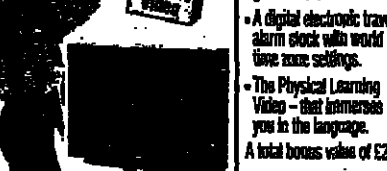
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Talk of the Toon

Newcastle's bonnie lad has fallen from grace. And things might get worse for Freddy, say Ian Burrell and Tim Laxton

"IF YOU" hate Freddy Shepherd, clap your hands," came the wave of venom reverberating around the stands at Newcastle United's St James's Park on Wednesday night. For the object of this derision, the new butler of the Toon Army was the stuff of nightmares.

Ever since he was a lad, when he had stood amid the swaying mass of the Gallowgate end, cheering on his black and white-shirted idols, the Geordie team meant everything to Shepherd. Now, as the club chairman, he has his name on the best seat in the ground. On Wednesday, he had chosen to leave it empty.

Three days earlier, a tabloid newspaper had reported that Mr Shepherd, and his vice-chairman Doug Hall, had luridly boasted to an undercover reporter of their sexual exploits with prostitutes in brothels around the world, and abused the club's followers. They also allegedly described Newcastle women as "dogs", insulted the club's star players and mocked the fans who paid £50 for replica shirts which they claimed cost £5 to make.

By Wednesday, after using a public relations firm to issue a meek apology to his family and the people of the North-East, he was into hiding.

But Freddy Shepherd is not a natural recluse. Inquiries by

The Independent have revealed that the man from Newcastle's impoverished East End has acquired an astonishing network of influential friends and allies in national and local government. Just how influential was made apparent when Freddy and his brother Bruce hosted a New Labour fund-raising evening, hosted by Tony Blair, at Milford Hall. The ancient Northumberland seat of the Milford family - immortalised in Jessica's Hons and Rebels - had been acquired by the two Shepherd brothers for £2.5m in 1992 and they both have homes there.

On that particular night in 1996, the great and the good were out in force. As well as Blair, there was John Prescott and Nick Brown, the Labour Chief Whip, who is considered a Shepherd family friend. Their company, Shepherd Offshore, which had given money to the Tories in 1993, made a £1,000 donation to Labour. The brothers have also allowed government ministers visiting the North-East to use their company helicopter.

Another rich man's plaything which Freddy enjoys is his boat. The current president of the Newcastle Yacht Club, he shares ownership of a luxury motorcruiser, called *Apollon*, with Sir John Hall, his great friend and mentor. When Sir John, who has dominated sporting and business life in the

North-East in recent years like no other, stepped down from Newcastle United - passing his 57 per cent shareholding to his son Doug - he allowed Mr Shepherd to succeed him as chairman last December.

By last week the fans were demanding his head. Newcastle supporter Sir Jeremy Beecham, former leader of the city council and now chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, was at Wednesday night's match. "They have said things which really make their position untenable," he said.

Last night Freddy Shepherd was holding on to his position by his fingernails. It's a long way back down to where he came from. He grew up amid the back-to-backs and outdoor toilets of post-war Albion Row in rundown Byker. Freddy's father

Charles set up a one-wagon haulage business, and his uncle William was a rag and bone man.

In the 1950s, Charles Shepherd took his family to Australia but soon returned to Byker, where his boys, Freddy and Bruce, joined his firm. They did good business delivering equip-

were masters in getting hold of the derelict sites and the government regeneration grant that often went with it," said one Newcastle businessman.

By 1991, Freddy Shepherd had become a good friend of Sir John Hall, the new Newcastle United chairman, who made

Meanwhile, his business links with the Hall family grew. They purchased a property close to St James's Park for £88,358 in 1993 and sold it to the football club in 1995 for £203,000.

Shepherd Offshore now employs 85 people and has diversified into warehousing, property

generation alone. Their shareholding in Newcastle United is worth just over £10m.

But as the clamour for Freddy Shepherd's head grows louder, inquiries by The Independent have revealed that his business affairs could be about to make him even more enemies.

The regeneration of Freddy Shepherd's native East End depends very largely on the success of a £55m project based on reviving shopping along the old Shields Road in Byker.

In December 1995, the council-backed plan - based around the building of a new food superstore - successfully

bid for £24m of government regeneration grants. But within two months, the Shepherd brothers announced plans for a rival 82,000-sq ft store, a mile away on an industrial site at Walkergate. The Shields Road

investment, farming and the provision of conference facilities. It also has a stake in Newcastle's rugby union, ice hockey and basketball clubs, which are controlled by the Halls. During the last four years, the brothers have made £6m in directors' remuneration.

Stefan Cross, a lawyer and Labour councillor who chairs the Strategy Delivery Committee, is concerned. "If the events relating to these purchases undermine the East End regeneration strategy by preventing us or delaying us from getting the major supermarket development it would be potentially disastrous for the East End of the city," he said.

When he became Newcastle chairman, Freddy Shepherd said: "To be chairman is a great honour for someone who comes from the East End of the city and stood on the Gallowgate End."

He now risks letting down the people of the East End - as well as Newcastle United. As Kevin Miles of the Newcastle Independent Supporters Association puts it: "They have brought shame on the club, on the city. They will not be forgiven."

The application, however, doesn't state the power of that little box. Yet, I had written underneath it of the associate management and elsewhere of the community experience one has as a Director of Social Services. Why didn't I tick that box? Sheer modesty, after ticking every other high-powered item.

My complaint about an administrative officer taking two seconds to put me on the scrapheap means my application has been referred to an independent assessor. But the unwanted feeling is back. Every sentence from Milton Keynes is peppered with despair about the number of applications and the complicated procedures that I am unlikely to surmount.

My experience on joint planning between local authorities and health authorities seems to count for nothing, as does having been a corporate manager of a local authority and having helped voluntary organisations to get their resources up and running.

Meanwhile, I am lost in paperwork, while some spiritual body who alternately dematerialises and materialises in Milton Keynes, picks up the goal posts and runs like hell.



The main men: Freddy Shepherd (right) and Douglas Hall toast their team before Newcastle's UEFA Cup tie with Monaco last year.
Photograph: North News

'The Shepherds were masters in getting hold of the derelict sites and the government grants that often went with them'

'It took two seconds to reject my application'

One of Tony Blair's political mentors has landed a £30,000 job in an NHS trust. With no such connections, Jean Shackleton was not so lucky



Jean Shackleton: Lost in paperwork

THE whole way appointments are made to NHS boards is a mystery to me. I have years of experience working at a very senior level in social services and voluntary organisations, but it took an official just two seconds to reject my latest application to join a health trust.

Tory health spokesman John Maples recently accused the Government of manipulating appointments to NHS boards. A spokesman for Health Secretary Frank Dobson replied: "This is not and has never been intended to be a politically motivated exercise to replace Tory deadheads with Labour deadheads." Now Paul Trippett, who runs the Labour club in the Prime Minister's constituency, has landed a £30,000-a-year chairmanship of an NHS Trust.

An advertisement appeared in a national newspaper in 1996 seeking Chairmen and Non-Executive Directors of Special Health Authorities and NHS Trusts. No formal qualifications were needed, but the skills required were formidable.

My application was approved and I was placed on a "database" at Milton Keynes. Then, I began to get that unwanted feeling. I was told in a letter dated 30 July, 1996: "When a vacancy arises, the database is searched for suitable applicants. Shortlisting is undertaken locally... a Regional Assessment Panel. The chairman will decide who to propose for appointment from [this] shortlist... The appointment is made by the Secretary of State, who requires a choice of candidates."

To get this far, I had filled in a large form, sent a CV and troubled two rather highly placed people for references.

My next letter was dated 31 January 1997. The Nolan inquiry and the substantial size of the database were quoted as the reason for keeping on the database only those people who "have been assessed as appointable by the Regional Panel". I was off the list. But I was advised that advertisements would soon be appearing locally. They did and I phoned three local trusts for application forms, each of which had to be returned to its local trust - no mention of Milton Keynes.

In February 1997 I filled in three large questionnaires, attached CVs and troubled my referees again. Two of the trusts found my expertise not suitable to the balance of interest they were seeking for their boards. The third did not reply. When I phoned, they said they had not received an application from me and had sent their shortlist to the Secretary of State.

One of the trusts asked if I would help in a voluntary capacity as an Associate Manager reviewing legal status of patients sectioned under the Mental Health Act. I was and am delighted to do so. However, after one year I had been interviewed once, had two training sessions with a third planned, and have attended one review of two patients.

There were more advertisements this year for Chairmen and Non-Executive Directors to National Health Service Bodies.

In February 1998, I responded to three local advertisements. All three applications went to the same woman in the NHS Executive at Milton Keynes.

The closing date was 16 February. Two days later the rejection for my application was posted. I phoned and discovered that although the blurb from each trust was different, I need only have filled in one application. The woman at Milton Keynes admitted there was no way of my knowing this. The rejection came so swiftly because an officer had skimmed down a line of boxes on the supplementary questionnaire and had taken out any application where the "community work" box had not been ticked.

Frank Dobson's message about the appointments that accompanied the application forms was: "We are looking for people to be members of local NHS boards who live in the area, who have a strong commitment to the NHS and who have the time and ability to contribute to its success. We are particularly keen to recruit people who are users or carers as community representatives on our boards as well as those with other relevant experience."

The application, however, doesn't state the power of that little box. Yet, I had written underneath it of the associate management and elsewhere of the community experience one has as a Director of Social Services. Why didn't I tick that box? Sheer modesty, after ticking every other high-powered item.

My complaint about an administrative officer taking two seconds to put me on the scrapheap means my application has been referred to an independent assessor. But the unwanted feeling is back. Every sentence from Milton Keynes is peppered with despair about the number of applications and the complicated procedures that I am unlikely to surmount.

My experience on joint planning between local authorities and health authorities seems to count for nothing, as does having been a corporate manager of a local authority and having helped voluntary organisations to get their resources up and running.

Meanwhile, I am lost in paperwork, while some spiritual body who alternately dematerialises and materialises in Milton Keynes, picks up the goal posts and runs like hell.

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Getting to grips with Leo

Suzanne Moore finds the presence of Leonardo DiCaprio, Hollywood's latest heartthrob, in London has set female (and some male) pulses racing

SOMETIMES people just don't get it. Even when it is staring them in the face. I got it a while ago when one of my daughter's friends lost the picture of HIM that she sleeps with every night around at my house. A major panic ensued for, of course, she could not live without the sacred image. Two days ago, several young girls of my acquaintance were among those screaming their hearts out in Leicester Square for he is here, walking amongst us mere mortals and he is the 'Sun King' Leonardo DiCaprio.

He has been anointed, not by the movers and shakers, but by the movie-going public

ing fad. But as usual the little girls understand in a way that grown men never do.

Over the past few days I have had some interesting conversations with men who have described Leonardo as little more than "a foetus", "a terribly mannered actor", "not worth thinking about" or as Jonathan Margolis put it in *The Mail* "What is remotely appealing about this wimpish 23 year old boy?" The sub-text to all this is that modern women are actually intimidated by real men - I take this to mean men who are fat, bald and boring - and now, maddeningly, prefer babies.

The secret of DiCaprio's appeal is obviously to do with his youth, but it is also to do with his sexuality which, rather than being non-existent, is far more androgynous and unthreatening than that of many teen idols. He is pale, skinny, haunted looking and, in the new film *The Man in the Iron Mask*, a great rump of a movie, decidedly effeminate with long hair and frock coats.

Now you could say that this kind of allure is nothing new or you could accept the fact that it is a thoroughly Nineties version of masculinity that both references and trumps the old romantic leads who tended to appeal to heterosexual male vanity.

While last year DiCaprio ranked at only number 28 in *Bliss*, a teen mag's *King of Crumple* Poll, this year he is absolutely number one. This is down not simply to the mega-success of *Titanic* but also, as they cutely call it, his role in 'Shaky's' *Romeo and Juliet*.

What seems to have passed so many critics by is that apart from *Romeo and Juliet* being a tale of doomed teenage love, it is, above all, a story of defiant teenage rebellion.

DiCaprio is a man of his time, the son of Sixties radicals. Like Winona Ryder and the Phoenix boys, his parents were hippies, his best friend Abbie Hoffman's son, America. This allows him to be a huge commercial success, but maintain a slightly embarrassed public stance about the whole Hollywood machinery. Yet, of course, no one could have managed his off-screen publicity more brilliantly than DiCaprio has.

So we can read that DiCaprio doesn't date since his heart was broken by model Kristin Zang, that he is lonely and has no one to take to the Oscars. Besides he doesn't want to go anyway in case he overshadows those he respects. We can read that he is actually dating Naomi Campbell or various other supermodels. We have Kate Winslet telling us that working with sex-god Leonardo was amazing because they really looked after each other and kissing him was like kissing her brother. To which we can only ask how does she know? We have the talk of his platonic relationship with Sharon Stone when he was nineteen and making *The Quick and the Dead* and though Sharon poured out her heart to him she didn't want to do a sex scene with him because of the age difference.

This combination of gentleness, ability to form good friendships with women and yet never to have a permanent girlfriend is the perfect way to get a young girl's heart for it implies a sexual passivity in the midst of a sexually aggressive culture.

What you hear over and over again when you talk to girls about him is their fantasy that he is just extremely kind and caring and nice. Sexy, but unthreatening-

ly sexy. As Amelia "almost 12" tells me: "I liked him before I got to secondary school, but when I got there everyone likes him. He is so gorgeous and could never be horrible or scary. He has a calming face." DiCaprio is also popular among some gay men who are sick of the macho look and the gay press this week is full of promises of "Leonardo naked".

According to Amelia she would still find him gorgeous if he were gay, but "no of-

fence to gay people. I just know he isn't because he doesn't talk in a high-pitched voice".

In *The Man in the Iron Mask* in which he plays Louis XIV and his twin brother, Philippe, we get, much to our delight, both good Leonardo and bad Leonardo. He is up against four actors, each one with their own brand of mature sex appeal: Gabriel Byrne, smoulderingly romantic, Jeremy Irons, vulnerably cerebral, Gerard De-

pardieu, the farthing, helching epitome of rough trade and Jon Malkovich, as fantastically bored and malevolent as ever. Yet it is DiCaprio's freshness that outshines the fading charms of these old musketeers.

For DiCaprio has what every star must dream of. He has been anointed, not by the movers and shakers of Hollywood, but by the movie-going public themselves.

For our daughters to pine for a gentle man, even though this is a fantasy, strikes

Main attraction: Leonardo, pictured at Cannes, was catapulted to stardom in *What's Eating Gilbert Grape* (top) and has consolidated it in his latest epic *The Man in the Iron Mask* (below)



me as more than a re-run of an enduring and old-fashioned myth of masculinity. It is something thoroughly modern and part of the on-going negotiations between the genders about what women want and how men are going to have to accommodate those changes.

You may mock, but I put it to you that yet again the little girls have got it right and, now able to command \$20 million a movie, young Mr DiCaprio certainly has.

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Not so Wilde about the boys

David Hare has miscast 'The Judas Kiss' and misjudged the passions of Oscar Wilde, writes Paul Taylor

TOM HOLLANDER currently has one of the more enviable jobs in showbusiness, or so the vast majority of women – and not a few men – might assume. In *The Judas Kiss*, the new David Hare play about Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, he's on the receiving end of some passionate osculation from the Oscar of the Hollywood-wowing hunk, Liam Neeson. Yet you suffer for both actors in what turns out to be a bizarrely miscast and deeply disappointing evening.

This duo make a ludicrous spectacle: the six-foot four inch Neeson, who looks as though he could tear a telephone directory in half with his bare hands, and Hollander – here doing his over-familiar Dinky-toy petulant toddler routine – who would need to stand on several volumes of the telephone directory to get mouth-to-mouth with his strapping lover. As the career of Alan Ladd so eminently proved, one advantage of Neeson's more regular medium, the movies, is that you can disguise inequalities of height by furtive use of ditches and boxes. But in the perpetual long-shot of theatre, there's not so much room for cover up. Hollander is so inhuman and mechanical as Bosie that the pair keep reminding you of a ventriloquist and his dummy. Equip this Lord Alfred with a monocle and you'd have what looks like the late 19th century's answer to Ray Allen and Lord Charles: "Say 'bottle of absinthe', Bosie!" "Gottle of agsinthe, gottle of agsinthe." It would, of course, have to be something classier than the proverbial beer.

Neeson, by contrast, could run masterclasses in stage presence. As anyone who saw his performance as the powerful sexy stoker in the New York transfer of *Anna Christie* will testify, commanding attention in a theatre comes as naturally to him as commanding the best table in certain restaurants must. The

electricity he generated with his future partner, Natasha Richardson, made the relationship between, say, William Hurt and Kathleen Turner in *Body Heat* look almost stand-offish.

The chemistry between Neeson and Hollander, by contrast, fails utterly to warm this Almeida production transplanted to the proscenium-arch Playhouse. It begins at zero and climbs into negative figures. Which is a bit of a handicap, given that Hare's theme – continuing a preoccupation evident in his last two plays, *Skylight* and *Any's View* – is the power (for good and ill) of consuming love. The drama is shaped on a structure of two acts, whose points of contrast and comparison are brought out with intelligence and delicate lyricism in Richard Eyre's production. Both halves speculate about a moment in Wilde's life of which little is known.

The first act admits us to the tragically temporary cocoon of the room Wilde took refuge in at the Cadogan Hotel in the tense hours between the collapse of his libel case against Bosie's father, the Marquess of Queensbury, and his own arrest. Here, with virtually nothing new to add to our perception of the case, Hare addresses the big question of why Wilde did not take the opportunity (allowed him by the authorities) to flee to the Continent.

The second act shows Bosie all-too-shyly willing to do a bunk from a life of squalid, penurious exile in Naples with his disgraced lover and assorted young fishermen ("We can't live on cock," one of the more concise and euphonious of the lines Hare has put in Wilde's mouth). Here, Bosie, in a more than mildly self-serving fit of principle, picks at the scab of why Wilde – in many ways a strange candidate for gay iconhood – avoided declaring the whole truth about their love when he was in the



Unconvincing: Liam Neeson (left) plays Oscar Wilde and Tom Hollander is Lord Alfred Douglas in *The Judas Kiss*

Photograph: Geraint Lewis

dock. At the same time, consistency being something you leave to the hoi polloi, Bosie is seen repositioning himself as a born-again heterosexual, wriggling out of a relationship that cost Wilde everything (not least his ability to write), and implying that a pay-off from Mummy of £500 should just about settle the bill. In both acts, true friendship is represented by Robert Ross who, in real life, was far more complex, admirable and substantial than the anguished, decent figure poor Peter Capaldi is required to flesh out here.

Neeson does a creditable job in the Cadogan Hotel episode of showing you a man under appalling strain at-

tempting nonetheless to behave with grace, nonchalant good humour, and stoic indifference to his foreseen fate. Ordering a meal with an epicure's attention to the luxuries of detail, Hare's Wilde wants to distend and savour this last moment of the other side of the delicate monied membrane that separates him from the lynch mob. The nobleness of life is to accede to the narrative one has written for oneself. We see Wilde the generous tipper, on the verge of an existence where he would have to cage the money for such gestures. Neeson, in both halves of the evening, rather overdoes the head-thrown-back, I'm-addressing-

posterity pose, but he gives excellent glimpses of the shredded nerves under the glittering highwire act. The play itself, though, is very poor. The air it has of saying something

much more penetration and a real ear for Wildian wit, in Terry Eagleton's *Saint Oscar*. Jude Law's brilliant performance as Bosie in the Stephen Fry movie helped you see that, be-

Wilde goes further and hints that the doting Oscar was not a valuable alternative to the father, but his damaging continuation in reverse.

Here, thanks to the script and Hollander's performance, which is like watching a petulant baby throwing food from its highchair, Bosie is, in the main, a monster of apologetic pettiness and aggrieved calculation. The essence of Wilde was his generosity of spirit, not a virtue David Hare is notably burdened with. The scene between Wilde and A E Housman in Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* speaks far more eloquently about what is simultaneously noble, tragic and paradoxical about unde-

luded infatuation than does this entire play where it's all boiled neatly down to Bosie standing for the kind of man whose governing principle is power and Wilde for the kind of man who is governed by love.

Hare and Wilde are a creative mismatch. Consider how differently each of them would treat the oddly comparable situation of the exiled Duke and Duchess of Windsor. What a wonderful subject that would have been for Wilde's marvellously unpinched or point-scoring genius.

A Hare play about Wilde proves to be a bore: how one wishes there could be a Wilde play about Hare.

Neeson and Hollander make a ludicrous spectacle... the pair remind you of a ventriloquist and his dummy

original in pointing out that, via Wilde's downfall, England was symbolically expelling an Irish socialist, is quite unearned. It's all been done before, with

cause of his background and his hating, hateful father, he too was a tragic figure. Thomas Kilroy's recent play *The Secret Fall of Constance*

WEEK ON RADIO ROBERT HANKS

PUBLISHING a book on tape and on radio but not in print may look gimmicky. But in the case of Tom Wolfe's *Ambush at Fort Bragg* – now available on the BBC Radio Collection, as well as being the current *Late Book* on Radio 4 – it seems like a rather good idea. Since its message is all about the way that television distorts modern society, it makes sense to try and put the message across to an audience less likely to sit down and read. And anyway, Wolfe's prose is perfect radio material – so lucid, bland and effortless that you can carry on with useful jobs like checking your bank statements and tackling those stubborn stains on the crockery without losing the thread.

The storyline is bulimic, so stuffed with issues that you expect it to be violently sick as soon as it can sneak out to the lavatory: it revolves around a current affairs television programme that "ambushes" people into making damaging admissions in front of hidden cameras. In this case, the producers are trying to wrangle a confession out of three redneck soldiers who have beaten to death a gay colleague.

As rather hurriedly read by Frank Muller, it has what in an ordinary book

you might call page-turning quality – you are curious to know how it will turn out. What spoils it is the way Wolfe substitutes background research and lengthy detailed exposition of action for character and emotional engagement. The only character given any inner life at all is a paunchy, balding television producer who broods constantly on the fact that more attractive colleagues get all the fame and money. This is presumably meant as a comment on the society is obsessed with

appearances; but it seems simplistic and predictable compared with the variety and subtlety of views expressed in *The Face* (Radio 4, Wednesday).

In this clever, occasionally eerie feature, Peter White went around asking various people (an artist, a mortician, a policeman, a plastic surgeon) about the relationship between face and character – the question gaining extra poignancy from the fact that White himself is blind. His starting point was the remark that we all get the face we de-

serve (White thought it was either Auden or Coco Chanel; in fact, it was the last entry George Orwell made in his notebooks before he died).

What gave the programme its strange, wistful quality was the way it turned life on its head: the first voice we heard was a mortician, explaining that you can read nothing, not intelligence, education, experience, into the face of a corpse. It finished at the other end of life, with babies who looked like old men, the experience of the ages engraved in their wrinkles. Surfaces, it seemed to argue, don't just mislead, they tell you cold-blooded and deliberate lies; and oddly, that came as a comforting thought.

WEEK IN THE ARTS DAVID LISTER

MR BEAN, rubbery-limbed and accident-prone, is a lovable sort of chap. He also says very little. Perhaps that comes from studying the outbursts of his alter ego, Rowan Atkinson. The latter has taken a swipe at Baffa in advance of next month's awards, because the British Academy had failed to nominate the Bean film. And as with all notable comedians, it's the way he tells 'em.

"I have become accustomed to Mr Bean's lack of appeal to the kind of people who work in television and the media," his quote ran, "and so I am a little more philosophical about our latest failures. The entertainment industry is littered with characters and personalities who have enjoyed broad popular appeal and a regular critical mauling in equal measure." Actually I can think of other examples. There were The Two Ronnies, for example, huge in the ratings but mercilessly mocked some years ago in sketches on *Not The Nine O'Clock News* (starring Rowan Atkinson). There was also Benny Hill, a pariah to critics in the years before his death and publicly attacked by Ben Elton, co-writer on Rowan Atkinson's *Blackadder*.

Rowan Atkinson's argument, namely that there should be a correlation between popular appeal and critical acclaim, does not stand up. If it were the case then there would never be a need for judging panels. The top three at the box office would simply win the top three prizes. It can be hard for those involved to accept that, just as it can be hard for them to accept that they may have now joined the comedy establishment that they once picked up awards for pillorying.

IN THE whole HarperCollins affair, the publisher's best-selling author, Jeffrey Archer, has

been unusually silent. No longer. He explained to me in his penthouse flat that he had felt in a difficult position, being an old friend of the two opposing protagonists – UK chairman Eddie Bell and his own editor, whistleblower Stuart Proffitt. But he did manage to find words, none too friendly, for his fellow authors threatening to leave the tarnished publishers. "You don't walk out on old friends just to get a bit of praise and publicity."

So could I take it that Lord Archer's agent would not be renegotiating his own three-book deal? "I don't have an agent any more," he grinned, glancing up at the *Monet* on the wall. "When you earn what I do, 15 per cent comes to rather a lot."

NOEL COWARD, I suspect, might have taken quite a fancy to Blair's Damon Albarn. But the two are never to be linked, not even on disc. Albarn collaborated with Michael Nyman on a version of Coward's *London Pride* for a new tribute album. But executive producer Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys has rejected it. Apparently the pair had written an experimental electronic track. "It bears no resemblance to the original," says a startled spokesman. And thus The Master's chance of joining Cool Britannia disappears.

THE quarterly journal of the National Art Collections Fund places the obituaries column for leading figures in the art world next to the column on people moving jobs. So next to the heading Obituary is the heading "Going, Going, Gone". I can reassure Lord Gower's friends that though his name appeared under the black letters GOING, he may be leaving the Arts Council but remains in robust health.

Thinking on your feet doesn't always work

BILL T JONES/Annie Zane Dance Company. Peacock Theatre. BILL T JONES is a very fluent speaker – but not necessarily intelligent. His latest work involves far less text than many of his earlier pieces but it still has a programme note.

The leaflet accompanying Bill T Jones' *We Set Out Early... Visibly Was Poor* (cryptic enough in itself, surely) tells us: "One of the work's goals is to invent a strategy whereby the dilemma of memory confronts our need for continuity." No-one imagines dance should be about anything, but if the choreographer says it is, we tend to demand some correlation between the artist's intention and what happens on stage.

Jones' plan to explore human emotion, social change, artistic development via the metaphor of a journey was perhaps unachievable. As dance, it was an attractive, occasionally exquisite response to his chosen music (Stravinsky, Cage and Vivaldi), but as philosophy it was unresolvable. There were compensations. Jones dancers range in size and shape from the rangy splendour of Germain Barnes to the

hugely unexpected Alexandra Beller, who is more Beryl Cook than Beryl Grey. The 10 dancers don't look alike or dress alike and they tread the elegant space mapped out by Bjorn G Amelan with steps that seem to speak two languages simultaneously. During the work's three sections, the dancers make their journey along and around a diagonal path, which runs across the stage. The Stravinsky segment was composed of conventional groups and solos, but by the third section, the ideas and relationships had fragmented. A woman skips to greet her lover, then rewinds to the wings repeatedly, like a recurring dream. Periodically, a member of the ensemble was picked out in a flickering beam. Why?

Then came The Pod. Made of crumpled cream silk and shaped like a vast, luminous woodlouse, this strange chrysalis progressed slowly across the backcloth. Suddenly, everyone wore grey. If there is a meaning it didn't appear to be one that Jones' dance could convey.

The curtain calls were led by Jones himself, a shamelessly perky sequence of synchronised



Express yourself: Attractive as dance but unreadable as philosophy Laurie Lewis

jumps and shouts. It was a masterly bit of audience manipulation, but it seemed strange that the closest engagement with the audience should take place after the show was over.

We Set Out Early... Visibly Was Poor final performance tonight. Peacock Theatre, Portugal Street, London WC2 (0171 314 8800).

— Louise Levene

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Arkady Shevchenko

DEFLECTIONS are mostly stealthy affairs, hushed up if possible by both winners and losers, albeit for very different reasons. Not so, however, the sensational passage from East to West of Arkady Shevchenko, Under Secretary-General at the United Nations for Political and Security Council Affairs, the highest-ranking Soviet diplomat ever to change sides during the Cold War.

Routine briefings at UN headquarters are rarely exciting, but the one of 11 April 1978 dropped a bombshell. Shevchenko, the spokesman noted, "has informed the Secretary-General that he is absenting himself from the office and, in this connection, he mentioned differences with his government".

It had been some two and a half years earlier that Shevchenko first decided to cast in his lot with the Americans, the climax of a long disaffection with his own country and government. Upon contacting the CIA, however, he learnt to his unpleasant surprise that he was required to remain in place; the international civil servant would have to sing for his supper, and earn sanctuary by spying. Slowly, Moscow's suspicions grew.

Finally, on 31 March 1978, came the cable of which every traitorous Soviet official abroad lived in dread, recalling him immediately for consultations, and "discussion of certain other questions". A couple of days later Shevchenko slipped from his Manhattan flat, climbed into a CIA car and was whisked off to a safe house in Pennsylvania to begin his second life.

His former masters, their fury matched only by their embarrassment, pulled out every stop to get him back. The KGB concocted wrenching letters from his family, and mingled promises of clemency with the most unsubtle of threats if he did not comply. To no avail. As Shevchenko was being debriefed in Washington, he learnt from a press report that his wife Lena had died in Moscow. Officially she had committed suicide. Shevchenko would always suspect she had been murdered by the KGB.

In some ways Arkady Shevchenko was an unlikely candidate to turn his back on his country. Born in Ukraine in 1930, the son of a doctor, he had spent much of his childhood in

the relative paradise of the Crimea (where his father met Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta in 1945 while secretly evaluating the health of the dying US President). Shevchenko enjoyed the best the Soviet Union could offer: a prominent role in the Komsomol youth organisation, and then a place at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, academy of the diplomatic elite.

He became a protégé of Andrei Gromyko, the hugely influential and seemingly eternal Soviet foreign minister. Shevchenko accompanied Nikita Khrushchev on his famous visit to America in 1960, and from 1963 to 1970 served at the Soviet mission to the UN. After three years in Moscow as a senior aide to Gromyko, he returned as Under Secretary-General in 1973, aged just 43. By then he was one of the brightest stars of his diplomatic generation, surely destined for a senior ambassadorship, perhaps even deputy foreign minister. As a card-carrying member of the nomenklatura, he would – by Soviet standards – want for nothing.

Shevchenko abandoned it all. One reason was material, stemming from a first stunning glimpse of New York on an earlier official mission in 1958: "I had seen photographs," he wrote, "but nothing had prepared me for the impact of the towering city on the horizon" (and, even more pertinently, of the plenty in its shops). From that moment, he was materially hooked on the West. Spiritually, the constraints and dishonesties of the Soviet system, magnified for one who lived abroad, became too much to bear. In retrospect, Shevchenko's defection was inevitable.

Its actual importance has been much debated. Certainly,



Shevchenko: a catch

he does not rank with Col Oleg Penkovsky, or the KGB station chief in London, Oleg Gordievsky, or even Igor Gouzenko, the cypher clerk who fled from the Soviet mission in Ottawa in 1945 carrying evidence of Moscow's elaborate wartime spy rings in the West and of how America's nuclear secrets had been passed to Moscow. A natural self-promoter with no doubt of his own talents, Shevchenko may moreover have parlayed the information he brought into rather more than it was.

Nevertheless he was a notable catch. During his service as an American "spy" at the UN, he passed over details of Soviet policy on every major issue. As a lifelong specialist in arms control, Shevchenko provided precious insight into Soviet negotiating strategy for the disarmament talks that stuttered along in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Third, no defector has ever known as much about the high-level workings of the Soviet state, the interplay between the Foreign Ministry, the military and the omnipresent KGB.

By the end of his life, of course, most of this was an irrelevance. The Soviet Union had vanished, and the man whose 1985 autobiography, *Breaking With Moscow*, had been an international best-seller had been washed up, forgotten, on history's strand. When he died, he was labouring in obscurity on a study of Soviet foreign policy.

But, as a symbol of the decay of his country in its later years, few match Shevchenko. And he understood what lay ahead. In June 1987, when Mikhail Gorbachev was at the height of his powers, Shevchenko told an interviewer that the Soviet leader then beguiling the West was "a transitional figure, because he still believes his glasnost is compatible with a Leninist Socialist society. It is not. What will be the political shape of Russia in the next century I cannot judge, but Communism there as a system is doomed." Shevchenko expected collapse might take a generation. It happened within four years.

Rupert Cornwell

Arkady Nikolayevich Shevchenko, diplomat: born Gorlovka, Ukraine, 11 October 1930; three times married (one son, one daughter); died Bethesda, Maryland 28 February 1998.



The Malcolm Mitchell Trio, c1949: Mitchell, centre, with Teddy Broughton, right, and Johnnie Pearson

Malcolm Mitchell

IN 1948 Malcolm Mitchell became the first British musician to play with Duke Ellington and earn money for doing so. In 1933 the Duke of Windsor had insisted on sitting in on drums with the Ellington band when it visited Britain but he didn't get paid for it.

Mitchell's debut with Ellington was equally eccentric in its way. Throughout the Forties and into the Fifties the Musicians' Union, then a British and, in tandem with the Ministry of Works, all-powerful fraternity, had a rule which banned American musicians from playing in England. In 1948 the Dizzy Gillespie and Spike Jones orchestras had had to cancel projected tours and the only way Ellington was able to work there was as a variety act without his band. He played piano at the London Palladium and music halls in nine other cities with his trumpeter Ray Nance, allowed in as a dancer and thus "showbiz", and his singer Kay Davis (girl singers weren't banned – the union presumably didn't regard them as musicians).

A trio consisting of Mitchell on guitar, Jack Fallon, bass, and Tony Crombie, drums, completed the group and the American *Variety* reported that the visit was "an outstanding success".

While the union ban was in place the Mitchell Trio, now with Johnnie Pearson on piano and Teddy Broughton on bass, accompanied other bewildered American "variety artists" including Hoagy Carmichael and the singer Maxine Sullivan when they toured in England. In 1948 Mitchell was called on to play with Stéphane Grappelli and Django Reinhardt for an eight-week tour of Sweden. The trio's first engagement was to open a new night-club in Nice, only to find the premises nowhere to be seen. Virtually penniless, they took to busking, and found a restaurant where they could play for meals and tips. After a few weeks they were heard by an official of the Monte Carlo Casino and played there for the rest of the winter season, even doing a session for Prince Rainier at his palace.

Mitchell was called on again by Ellington in October 1958 for an ATV broadcast. The programme, *Atlantic Showboat*, was produced by a company owned by the television presenter Hughie Green, and jazz enthusiasts were outraged when he insisted on presenting it himself. The trio reassembled to play at last year's Ellington '97 Conference in Leeds, and Mitchell took part in panel discussions where he gave a graphic account of his experiences with Ellington.

Although dedicated to jazz, Mitchell moved into more commercial music to earn his living, arranging the music for the famous Hovis television commercials. He fought against the tide when he formed a jazz-oriented big band in January 1955. He lost a lot of money and broke the band up in 1956 when his health deteriorated as a result of the strain. He reformed the trio in 1957, working often as accompanist to visiting stars and as a solo act in cabaret. The trio appeared in Royal Variety shows and provided the musical content for a

long series of Kenneth Horne's *Round the Horne* radio show.

Mitchell had his own television series on BBC and Southern television and wrote the music for Bob Monkhouse's *Golden Silents* television series. He eventually formed a group, Mitchell Monkhouse Associates (MMA), for the production of music and jingles, with Monkhouse and Henry Howard. MMA was a pioneer in the prestige business conference field, and as the publicity firm HPICM designed the massive figures for the Millennium Dome.

Originally taught by the guitar virtuoso Ivor Mairants, Mitchell had during the middle Forties played in many respected bands including those led by Felix Mendelssohn, Don Barrigo, Johnny Franks, George Evans and Dick Katz.

Steve Voce

Malcolm Mitchell, guitarist, bandleader, composer and vocalist: born London 9 November 1926; three times married (three sons, one daughter, one stepson, one stepdaughter); died Bognor Regis, Sussex 9 March 1998.

Joseph Darracott

JOSEPH DARRACOTT, writer, art historian, editor, and museum man, was a great servant of art. He left behind him, as a monument to his loyalty and devotion, some 50 issues of the quarterly journal *Museum News*, 20 scholarly monographs, catalogues and the like, and six books.

He spent 14 hardworking years as Keeper of Art at the Imperial War Museum, from 1969. At the same time, he became one of the original band of museum people who helped to found, in 1971, National

Heritage, the organisation for support and promotion of museums in Britain, and its Museum of the Year Award (first awarded in 1973), which he continued to serve until his sudden death.

In 1986, he took on the editorship of *Museum News*, which has now gone through over 100 numbers, and produced virtually all the last 50 or so issues with very little help from anyone else. He was a wise and patient editor, not given to wild editorials, and had a good eye for articles worth commission-

ing. The same qualities of integrity, sanity, and balance, combined with a perceptive eye for detail, informed his many reports for the judges' committee of the Museum of the Year Award. His was frequently a voice of reason among more strident opinions.

All that committee will have memories of Darracott which will be concentrated in his quiet, rather shy, almost innocent charm. But his best memorial will be his six books. Two were useful studies of the art by-products of war, *The First World*

War in Posters (1974) and *A Cartoon War: the Second World War in cartoons* (1990). Two were invaluable additions to the body of art criticism, *Art Criticism* (1991) and *Letters from Artists* (1997). Perhaps the most outstanding were his study *The World of Charles Ricketts* (1980), and *England's Constable*, a sympathetic short life which he wrote for the Folio Society in 1985.

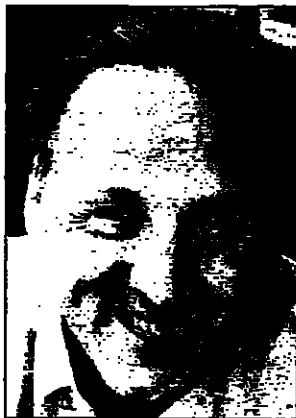
Joe Darracott was born in 1934 and was educated at Bradfield College and Lincoln College, Oxford, where he read

History from 1954. His first post in the museum world, after completing his training at the Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie in Paris, was as Keeper of the Rutherford Collection at Manchester City Art Gallery from 1961. In 1964 he took on a post at Hornsey College of Art as Lecturer in Art History; and his five-year tenure of service coincided with the famous sit-in, perhaps the most prominent manifestation in England of the revolutionary spirit which swept universities all over Europe in the late Sixties.

It was, perhaps, typical of him that his personal reaction to this kind of turmoil was to become calmer and gentler and more thoughtful. To colleagues who came to know him in later years, his temperament seemed almost saintly. He was loyal, patient, devoted to the causes he served, and, one would have thought, almost impossible to quarrel with.

John Letts

Joseph Cobbould Darracott, art historian and museum curator: born Aldershot, Hampshire 22 February 1934; married 1959 Brit-Marie Holm (two sons, one daughter); died London 6 March 1998.



Darracott: voice of reason

also played an important role in launching Britain's first national gay newspaper, *Gay News*, in 1972, and was for many years editor of *Gay Scotland* magazine. He co-founded the Edinburgh Gay & Lesbian Community Centre. In 1974, the oldest centre of its kind in Britain.

Ian Dunn was a long-time Labour Party and trade union activist (in Nalco and Unison), who hoped to win selection as a Labour candidate for the Scottish Parliament. A planning officer with Edinburgh Council until he took early retirement, he was also a keen conservationist, helping save from demolition Mansfield Place Church in Edinburgh, with its magnificent murals by Phoebe Traquair Wilson.

Peter Tatchell

Ian Campbell Dunn, campaigner: born Glasgow 1 May 1943; died Edinburgh 10 March 1998.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

BURKITT: Beryl Mary, of Darlington, on 18 March 1998. Respectfully after a short illness, aged 73 years. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to Woodland Trust, Grantham.

KOMNENOVIC: Dusan passed away on 19 March at home in Sarajevo and is buried after a short illness. Dusan loved his wife Milica, father of Jovanka and Diana, father-in-law of Djordje and Zvezdana. Funeral service to be held at St Mark's Church, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent, at 12.15pm on Sunday 22 March. Burial in Bileća, former Yugoslavia, on 21 March.

Announcements for GAZETTE BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Telephone 071-793 2001 or faxed to 071-793 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). Births, marriages must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £6 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS: The Duke of York, Colonel-in-Chief, will visit the 3rd Volunteer Battalion, The Buffs, on the 21st of March. The Duke of York will visit the 3rd Volunteer Battalion, The Buffs, on the 21st of March. The Duke of York will visit the 3rd Volunteer Battalion, The Buffs, on the 21st of March.

Birthdays

Lord Boston of Paversham QC, former chairman, TVS Entertainment, 68; Mr Peter Brook, theatrical producer, 73; Dr Clark Bradford, former President, Jampton College, Oxford, 67; Mr Brian Clough, former football manager, 63; Mrs Ann Cloyd MP, 61; Mr Timothy Dalton, actor, 52; Miss Owen Davies, former Headmistress, St Swithun's School, Winchester, 72; Mr Michael Foreman, author and illustrator, 60; Mrs Lila Golding MP, 65; Mr Roger Hammond, actor, 62; Professor Richard Hare, philosopher, 79; Mr David Heathcoat-Amory MP, 49; Mr Michael Heseltine MP, 65; Mr Anthony Hopkins, composer and conductor, 77; Mr Freddie Horne, former Chief Taxing Master of the Supreme Court, 81; Mr David Kidney MP, 43; Mr Andy Love MP, 49; Miss Ann Mackay, soprano, 42; Sir Peter Main, former chairman of Boots, 73; Mr Ved Mehta, author and journalist, 64; Baroness Nicol, Deputy Speaker in the House of Lords, 75; Lord Oakesy, racing journalist and television commentator, 69; Sir John Palmer, former President, Law Society, 78; Sir Brian Shaw, Chairman, Port of London Authority and of the Automobile Association, 65; Maj-Gen Sir John Swinton, Lord-Lieutenant of Berwickshire, 73; Mr Roger Whitaker, singer and songwriter, 62; Professor Roger Williams, Vice-Chancellor, Reading University, 56.

TOMORROW: Lord Alton, former MP Deputy Speaker, House of Lords, 86; Mr George Benson, singer and jazz guitarist, 55; Mr Desmond Browne MP, 46; Miss Betty Callaway, ice-skating champion, 70; Miss Sheila Cavanagh QC, Vice-Chancellor of the Province of Canterbury, 64; Mr Brian Hannahan, broadcaster, 49; Mr David Ingram, former chairman, British Waterways Board, 70; The Lord of Ancre, Sir Benjamin of Osmo, St. Deogratias, St. Nicholas Owen, St. Nicholas von Frie and St. Paul of Narbonne.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Johann Sebastian Bach, composer, 1685. Deaths: Sir Michael Scudamore Rodgrew, actor, 1985. On this day the London Philharmonic opened, 1958. Today is the Feast Day of St. Ender, St. Fancosia and St. Serapion of Thimus. **TOMORROW:** Births: Sir Anthony van Dyck, painter, 1599. Deaths: Thomas Carew, poet, 1639. On this day: an attempt was made to abduct Princess Anne in the Mall, London, 1973. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St. Basil of Ancre, St. Benvenuto of Osmo, St. Deogratias, St. Nicholas Owen, St. Nicholas von Frie and St. Paul of Narbonne.

FAITH & REASON

GodCo is not the answer to a pompous Synod

The Church of England understands its key problem. But it is about to propose the wrong solution, argues Andrew Brown

THE MOST shocking thing about the internal Synod memo leaked to yesterday's *Guardian* is how clearly it is written: "We are a hostage to fortune on so many issues; our agenda is terminally tedious; we have become a refuge for the pedant, the bureaucrat and the bore." Here at last is a message from the Church which a nation can unite behind. So naturally they kept it confidential.

The author of the memorandum is said to be Pete Broadbent, one of the two men passed over for the job of Bishop of Liverpool – Tony Blair apparently thought they were insufficiently impressive to the outside world. So he has personal reasons for seeing the inadequacies and limitations of the present system; but he does see deeply into them and has had a lot of experience of the Synod's inner workings. In fact there is hardly anyone who would disagree with his diagnosis. One of the most telling arguments that some of the

Church of England's problems are structural rather than personal comes from the fact that many of the people who work for the General Synod are intelligent, experienced and effective at their jobs. There are exceptions, but fewer than there used to be. The parish clergy, too, are often people of great gifts, thoughtfully used. So how come all this energy and intelligence winds up in a swamp?

The answer, agreed by everyone, is that the pretensions of the Synod, and indeed of establishment generally, no longer fit the sort of jobs people find themselves doing. The Church of England feels like a beleaguered voluntary society, and not like an essential expression of the nation's spirituality.

The contrast between pretension and performance comes up constantly at the parish level, in all the innumerable decisions that must be made about who to marry, how to baptise, and how to conduct funerals for a largely unbelieving congregation. But nowhere is it more chronic than at the General Synod, which spends hours, possibly centuries, administering things it no longer believes in. Something has gone dreadfully wrong with an organisation which greets visitors to its web page with the message, "Every large active body of people needs a committee."

There have been two broad reactions to this paralysis. One is to withdraw from it. It is a commonplace that the bishops of the Church of England are by and large among its least impressive clergy; but one reason for this is that the ones who might be impressive simply don't want the jobs any more. The bishops who are doing a constructive job seem to have as little as possible to do with the Synod and run their dioceses on a fairly flexible *ad hoc* basis. Yet even if you don't like the models of decision-making that the Church has, the fact remains that some central decisions have to be made and the Synod is a device of unparalleled efficiency for obstructing the process. This did not matter in a more authoritarian society, when bishops told clergy what to do and by and large they did it, with the whole process funded by long-dead laity.

So this leads to the second reaction, to try to modernise the machinery. This has been a consistent concern of Dr Carey since he took office eight years ago and I don't think that even his most persistent critics would fault his identification of the problem. The difficulty comes with the proposed solution: it sometimes looks as if the Synod, an attempt to govern the Church of England on the model of a parliament, is to be replaced by GodCo, an attempt to govern the Church as if it were a lean,

hungry, thrusting corporation with outstanding growth prospects.

I don't think there can be any sensible objection to learning from the efficiencies of the outside world. What's worrying is the assumption that modern businesses are efficient. But the business world can be a place of bewildering incompetence, stupidity and waste; and when models of efficiency drawn from business practice are applied to organisations which have an essentially idealistic purpose, the results can be absolutely disastrous. Look at the BBC. Look at the NHS.

The Church of England has actually made a very good job of sorting out its financial mess without great institutional change. It does have access to an enormous reservoir of lay competence and goodwill which the Synod should embody. It may need less reform than it believes. It certainly needs less public relations. The memorandum argues for "media-friendly bishops and appropriate spinning of stories" but this is ignorant and silly: press officers can't get away with behaving like Alistair Campbell and Charlie Whelan unless they have access to real power with which to frighten people. The answer to Synod's gap between power and pretension is not to professionalise its pretension. Rather it is to ensure that it can exercise properly the few powers it needs.

THE INDEPENDENT

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Hague can save the People's Europe

UP AND down the country, thousands of people are angry. So angry that many of them will converge on York this weekend to protest, rally, condemn, wave banners and hear angry speeches. What is it this time? Not fox hunting or beef on the bone, but the single European currency. Oh that, you might say. Whatever happened to the euro? It prompted the late James Goldsmith to make "the most important video you will ever watch", delivered free to millions of homes in the run-up to the election. It was about sovereignty, our future as an independent nation state, the end of a thousand years of history. It was the issue which split the most successful party in the democratic world from top to bottom, forced a sitting prime minister to beg his own party not to "bind his hands" in the middle of an election campaign, and sent the Conservatives crashing to humiliating defeat.

Then... well, then it went quiet. Tony Blair's strategy has been to send the issue to sleep, bathed in the soothing balm of pragmatism and a willingness to join in principle - but not yet. Meanwhile, Tory wishful thinking that the project was bound to go belly-up before E-day has evaporated, with the Big Moment now only nine months away.

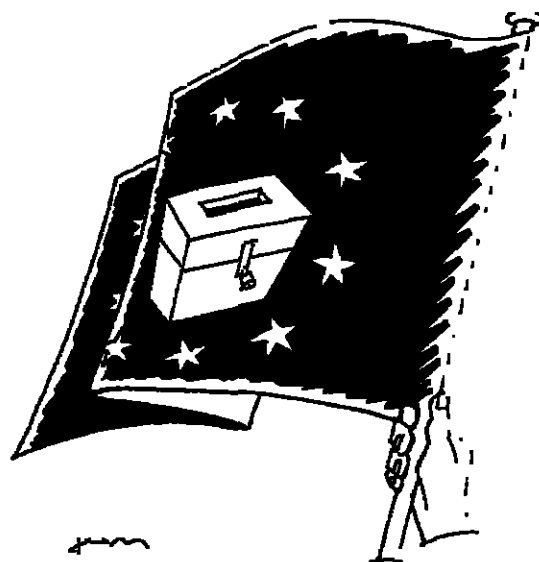
William Hague's dilemma is now acute: big business, which has long been his party's core source of funding, broadly welcomes the euro. Little England, which has long been his party's ideological bedrock, swears to die in the last ditch holding out against it. They are gathering under the banner of the Anti-Maastricht Alliance and the slogan "Save Our Pound" to lobby European finance ministers in York today.

When Mr Hague became leader the party yearned for clarity, so he went with the Little Englanders. But now that gamble looks an increasingly shaky bet for the long term. And he has found himself tied in knots over the wording of the policy: opposed to joining the single currency for 10 years, opposed for two parliaments, opposed at the next election. The ultras do not like it because they are against the euro in principle and for always. Businessmen do not like it because they do not want to get left behind. And the general public do not understand it.

It is clearly time for the Conservatives to find a new approach. The stage was set by Mr Hague's unlikely advance guard, Michael Portillo. Last year he was used to trail carping Conservatism before Mr Hague's conference speech. Last weekend he sounded like a *Private Eye* parody apology on David Frost's sofa. He may have given the impression, he almost said, that supporters of the euro were wicked federalists plotting to take away Britons' birthright by stealth. He now wished to make it clear that he "respected the point of view" of those who believe the euro will unite Europe and avoid future wars. He still disagreed with it, but "if that is the enterprise they have embarked upon, I wish them well."

This week the elements of a new policy were floated in the press. It was suggested that Mr Hague would drop any fixed timetable for opposition to the euro and set out instead the tests for membership. In addition, he would shelve the idea of a referendum of party members on the issue. Conspicuously, none of this was contradicted by the Tory leader's speech to small business people yesterday.

The question is: is this a plausible strategy? Our answer: not really. For the rag-bag of the Anti-Maastricht Alliance, it is a simple sell-out. It does not matter how tough and impractical Mr Hague's criteria are, merely by setting out the conditions under which he would support Britain's theoretical entry into monetary union, he would be repeating the one error their



heroine Margaret Thatcher admits to making - that of moving into the grey zone marked "when the time is right".

That will not satisfy Lord Tebbit, with his vivid comparison of Economic and Monetary Union to the *Titanic*, nor Lord Shore, accusing Gordon Brown of trying to sell a "poison package" to the British people.

It paves the way for a *rapprochement* with business leaders - except for Euro-sceptic millionaire Paul Sykes, who is paying an opera singer to serenade the Chancellor and his fellow ministers with "Land of Hope and Glory". But most businesses would probably prefer to deal with a Labour Government that was more constructively engaged with the euro currency zone.

None of this, however, is nearly enough. Mr Hague urgently needs a bigger theme with which to transcend the divisions of his party and the apathy of the majority of the public.

Luckily, Mr Blair's softly-softly approach to Europe provides him with precisely such an opportunity. Why should the Tories not seize the rhetoric of a People's Europe and make it their own? Why not outflank Labour by proclaiming the goal of a democratic Europe? After all, as a party of recent government, they know all about how the institutions of the European Union are governed by deals and trade-offs behind closed doors. The one criticism that supporters and opponents of European integration agree on is the "democratic deficit" - that the EU's ruling bodies are too remote from the continent's peoples.

The sceptics are right to point out that the Danish government went on holding referendums on Maastricht until it got the "right" answer (they have another one shortly on the Amsterdam treaty revisions). They are right to point out that the German people are opposed to the euro.

There is no doubt that the European Parliament is a deeply flawed democratic assembly. For all the brave talk about opening up the Council of Ministers, it remains an obscure series of closed meetings.

The People's Europe theme is consistent with moderate Euro-scepticism. A truly democratic Europe would have hesitated for much longer over a single currency. It would have had a long and open debate over the extent to which the European Central Bank should be under political control.

It is not too late to propose a new constitution for Europe: far from it. With the imminent end of the Helmut Kohl Era, and the expansion of the EU by up to 10 more members, now is precisely the time, especially for a party freed from the constraints of office, to move boldly beyond an acceptance of the state of Europe as it is.

Labour seems to have settled too easily into the technocratic consensus of Brussels cabals, with simultaneous translation. If the Tories show imagination, they have the chance to lead the European argument once again.



100-year-old habit: the nuns of Tyburn Convent celebrate the centenary of their order, formed in Paris in 1898 and established in London in 1901

Photograph: Kalpesh Ladhiga

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293-2534

Probation works

"PRISON WORKS", the "fatuous slogan" so elegantly demolished by your leading article ("Why our prisons are not working", 20 March) damaged more than the prison system.

Although public thinking about punishment is beginning perceptibly to change, probation-run sentences are still trying to recover from the damage done to their credibility in the last five years as "prison works" effectively marginalised and dismissed all else. Prison and probation were deliberately set up in opposition, rather than being seen as different punishments in the same spectrum of disposals to be used by judges and magistrates.

Probation services supervise about 30,000 more offenders than go through prisons in the course of a year, and usually for much longer periods. Granted, these offenders are usually less dangerous to the public but they are often more prevalent and their offending is no less intractable. Without claiming absolute success, results show that reoffending is reduced, victims are spared and the offender is given an improved chance of going straight.

These sentences are neither soft (about six million hours of unpaid work is carried out by offenders on community service per year) nor without discipline (between 20 and 30 per cent of those who breach their orders are briskly removed to prison).

Probation also provides the programmes that accord with the new catchphrase as "tough on the causes of crime": unemployment, drinking, drug-taking, educational underachievement, degenerating moral standards and outright selfishness.

The probation service works to serve the justice system and the victimised public. We need more champions who are prepared to come forward to nail their colours to this constructive, if non-populist, mast.

MARY HONEYBALL
General Secretary
Association of Chief Officers of Probation
London E1

EU's undeserving poor

THE announcement this week by Monika Wulz Mathies, European Commissioner for Regional Policy and Cohesion, about changes in EU funding ("Britain to lose EU aid to regions", 19 March) divides the people of Europe into the deserving poor and the undeserving poor. It would appear that we in the UK fall into the second category.

The UK is the fourth poorest country in the EU and one of the largest net contributors to its funds. To date the Commission has allocated resources according to need. However, following publication of the draft regulations, it appears that richer EU regions may stand to benefit at the expense of other regions with equally important economic and social problems.

The UK is being penalised because of its lower levels of unemployment. In fact, financial assistance to support job creation should be given to the poorest regions and they are those with the lowest gross domestic product (GDP). South Yorkshire has been highlighted as one such area where declining heavy industry has had a severe impact. However, there are other areas which have equally severe problems and yet seem to be offered no help and are to remain excluded from the benefits of EU membership.

The Isle of Wight is one such area. Our GDP is 64 per cent of the EU average. This is lower than South Yorkshire, Merseyside and Cornwall. Our unemployment figure of 9.9 per cent is the highest in the south east. Wages on the island are 16 per cent below the national average.

The Government must act to ensure that we do not remain in picturesque poverty as the "undeserving poor" of Europe.

SCOWLEY
Deputy Leader and Chairman
Economic Development Committee
Isle of Wight Council
Newport, Isle of Wight

Radioactive food

YOU report ("Britain's radioactive lobsters upset Norway", 19 March) Michael Meacher's confidence that radioactive foodstuffs pose no threat to health.

Mr Meacher gets his advice from the National Radiological Protection Board, who believe that internal radiation can be understood in terms of a crude "average dose" model; NRPB's belief rests on that of the International Commission on Radiological Protection; ICRP's rests on studies of disease in Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors - people exposed to external radiation. These studies have fatal flaws.

First, Professor Alice Stewart has shown that the radiation resistance of the A-bomb survivors is not, as ICRP assume, typical of the population at large. Second, the studies are silent about the health effects of internal radiation.

These and other weaknesses show that the officially accepted model is not scientifically secure, yet it is used to estimate the risks of discharges from nuclear plant like Sellafield, and of letting nuclear waste be recycled into consumer goods under the new European Basic Standards Directive. Predictably, those risks are judged to be "below regulatory concern" so the consumer will not be informed and will have no choice.

Mr Meacher says "there is never room for complacency", but when abundant evidence of genetic damage at very low doses was reported to the

European Parliament in February neither the UK government nor NRPB was represented, and neither the UK nor the EU is funding research into this field. Complacency is rife.

RICHARD BRAMHALL
Co-ordinator
Low Level Radiation Campaign
Llandrindod, Powys

Dividing by three

WHATEVER method the Dean of Westminster Abbey uses to separate the sheep who come to pray from the goats who come to gawp, it will not be by triage ("Pray or pay at Abbey", 19 March). For that, as its name suggests, is the dividing into three: originally of coffee beans into those of the best quality, middling or broken; and, more recently, of patients caught up in a medical emergency into those whose lives can be saved by rapid treatment, those who can wait a while and those alas for whom no treatment will avail.

Incidentally, it may be that once upon a time a trial was a necessary process only for the third class of individuals neither obviously guilty nor obviously innocent.

ROSS KESSEL
Malborough, Devon

Foreign Office blunders

NOBODY should blame Robin Cook for his real or alleged blunders in Israel. Ministers act mostly on the advice of their officials.

In 1991, John Major, during a visit to the USSR, was not allowed by the Foreign Office to meet the leader of the opposition, Boris Yeltsin, who a few months later was elected president. It was a monumental blunder by the FCO "advisers".

OLEG GORDIEVSKY
London WC2

No ordinary Chancellor

ANDREW MARR is quite right to object to the torment that spin doctors inflicted on the Chancellor in order to make him look aware of families, children and their needs before his Budget ("Playing happy families is not the way to the nation's heart", 17 March).

Surely Gordon Brown's entourage should have understood by now that they have a sulky, pouting star on their hands. All they really have to do is let him slowly work his magic on the voters, who will soon come to love him as Heathcliff rather than Cliff Richard.

The same sort of mistake was made once before with a national celebrity, when Laurence Olivier was cast in a West End play entitled *Semi-Detached* in which he was required to play "an ordinary bloke". As the critics and public agreed, Olivier could do anything - anything - but be ordinary.

MAUREEN GREEN
London SW1

Pitt's income tax

DESPITE what William Hartston says (Budget Bite, 18 March), Income Tax has not been with us ever since 1799. Pitt abandoned it almost immediately because of technical problems. He reintroduced it soon afterwards. It was in fact withdrawn after Waterloo; then brought in once again in 1842. It's been with us ever since then.

ROBERT DAVIES
London SE3

Murder, rape and hunting

STAN ROSENTHAL asserts (letter, 17 March) that hunting is in the same category as paedophilia, rape and murder. It is in fact extremely simple to distinguish between them. Murder, rape and child abuse all involve objective harm to an unconsenting human being. Hunting does not. It really is as simple as that.

JONATHAN JONES
Oxford

LETTER from THE EDITOR

THE Chancellor's annual Budget speech is one of those events that mark the newspaper year. In the diary for months, lots of build-up, everyone from staff to contacts to friends claiming to know what he will say, then the silence while he speaks, followed by a mad, exhilarating dash to produce the paper on time, to dissect, explain, analyse every single thing he said.

This year, as in previous years, *The Independent* did not produce one newspaper for the morning after the Budget but effectively two: a 20-page section poring over Gordon Brown's words; and our normal "non-Budget" paper, full of the other news that day. It was frantic and hair-raising - not least when I was told, with less than an hour to go before deadline, that our computers were finding it hard to cope with the information rush and were slowing down - but we got there.

While the Budget is a fixture in the calendar it is also one of the ways in which a newspaper can be judged. How did we do? How did our coverage compare with our rivals? The answer to both, I am delighted to say, was brilliantly. No obvious howlers, no gaping holes, no sense of getting the balance wrong. Mind, it was tough and go. When

Mr Brown sat down we realised that thanks to the insistent prodding of his anonymous "friends" in Whitehall we had schemed in page 4 of the Budget section for pensions, ready for a major announcement. But, of pensions, barely a whisper. It was that sort of Budget: a lot of nudges and winks beforehand but little to set the pulse racing on the day.

ONE AREA where the Chancellor did send the right sort of signal was the environment - but not to the satisfaction of all our readers. On the morning after the Budget, one reader rang in to complain that Mr Brown must have something against tall people. I'm not against environmentally friendly cars, he said, but I can't pack a 6ft 4in body into an eco-friendly Mini Metro. The call made me realise what it must like to be the Chancellor, confronted by every minority interest going, lobbied on all fronts, constantly reminded by anxious civil servants to examine all the pitfalls. At least in a newspaper, we can try and address most people's views and problems but to actually take decisions that directly affect how many pounds they have in their pockets and

even what car they should drive, must be hell - yet Mr Brown gives the impression of being in his element. Hmmm...

THE BIG news of the week was that the Government has now pronounced that men are no longer the official family breadwinners. This realisation, revealed in *The Independent* - we regarded it as so important as to put it at right of the top of the front-page in our "hemper" across seven columns - should herald a bright new dawn for all working mothers, of which I am one. Yet, what did we see in the Budget speech just hours previously? Very little to improve the lot of women struggling on their own to raise children and to hold down jobs. It is all very well for a male-dominated Government to notice a social phenomenon that many of us have known for years. Whether it will actually translate into meaningful reform of a system that still reflects a bygone age, when the man went to work and the little woman stayed at home is quite a different matter. I wait to be impressed, Tony and Gordon.

ROSIE BOYCOTT

QUOTE UNQUOTE

I would be happy to see the Devil's buttermilk banned from society - Ian Paiste MP on Draught Guinness

I hang a sarong on the gatepost, so people should know if I am there. With luck, they will just see steam rising from the grass - Rupert Grey, lawyer, who bathes in a tub near a "right to roam" path

If I am given the privilege of becoming the first democratically elected Mayor of London I'll never write another book - Lord Archer, Tory peer

The Red Book or presumably in the Prime Minister's case the unread book - William Hague, Tory leader, on the post-Budget Treasury document

Just suppose I looked like Leonardo DiCaprio...



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
ON THE PROS AND
CONS OF LOOKISM

WHAT would have happened to me, I wonder, if I had been as beautiful as Leonardo DiCaprio?

I don't mean the film-star thing, I'm just talking about how my life might have been different if, instead of looking like this (dear reader, please supply your own mental arrow to the picture above), I had looked like this (now create your own mental picture of luscious Leonardo, in the unlikely event that there isn't already one somewhere in the pages of this Saturday edition). What village sex god lies buried here?

Let's start at age 10. In the third and fourth years at Gospel Oak primary school, as the Beatles sang *Love Me Do* (and the Rolling Stones belted out the - to us - incomprehensible *Let's Spend The Night Together*), all the boys in my class were rated by the girls, from Number One downwards, on personal lists. The chief criterion for a high placing was a pre-pubescent version of fanciability - what the Americans call "cuteness" - though pre-feminist caprice played its part too, fortunately.

These lists were prepared once a week, ruthlessly, for two years. That made about 60 lists in all. And I came top just once, one golden week when caprice won out over cuteness. Otherwise, I hovered around 10 - above the obese and one-eyed, but well below the sex gods. On a par with Edward Fossbrook. No; badly dressed, large featured and scowly, I was always more in demand for quizzes than for kisses.

Nor was I ever interfered with by strange men. The rather mild perverts who hid behind trees on Hampstead Heath in the Sixties, camouflaged in gaberdrine, left me well alone. They were simply not that desperate. I was always slightly offended by this, although, like being a milk monitor, it was only because I hadn't been asked - not because I actually wanted the job.

Now, if I had looked like Leonardo...

I would have been top of those lists every single time. Their publication would have held no terrors for me at all. And every gaberdrine from the Lido to Jack Straw's Castle, would have opened at my approach. But let's move on.

And let's skip adolescence. Being astonishingly good looking in an all-boys comprehensive school is of limited benefit. The only quality that is truly valued there is a bone-headed athleticism. I guess Miss Humnabe, the gorgeous blonde teacher who once, unwisely, confided mild details of her sex life to *Cosmopolitan*, might have taken more notice of me. That's it, though.

But now we reach the part where it really matters. And can I get one thing clear? When I was Leonardo's age, I was no fatter than he is now; I did not discover food until I was 25. Still, I was not often going to be able to persuade beautiful young women into bed with me by virtue of my looks alone. Other talents had to be put on display, other tactics deployed. Seduction, for the unfair of face, is a branch of the arts. It involves timing, sensitivity and - above all - speech. Most of us learn to become Cyrano.

So, I compensated. I wooed with words and diffidence. I cajoled. Above all I constructed a self of immense sweetness, strength, humour and reliability. If you can't fancy this man's face, the message went, at least check him out as a father to your unborn children. Sometimes I begged.

Mostly, however, I failed. No, that's wrong. Mostly, I didn't bother even trying (which was sometimes - paradoxically - a very effective come-on). And if ever I did succeed, I behaved (on the whole) with a decorous regard that shouted to my pretty partner, "Thank you for having me. And please, please let me come again." I tried.

Ah, but what if I had looked like Leonardo? If a teeny leet or suggestive smile had been enough to furnish my student bedroom or bachelor house with the nubility of British womanhood? Would I have tried then? Would I have displayed such elaborate - and functionally unnecessary - regard for the feelings of my partners? Would I hell. If every ticket you buy wins the lottery, why spend any time on choosing the numbers? That's what I always say.

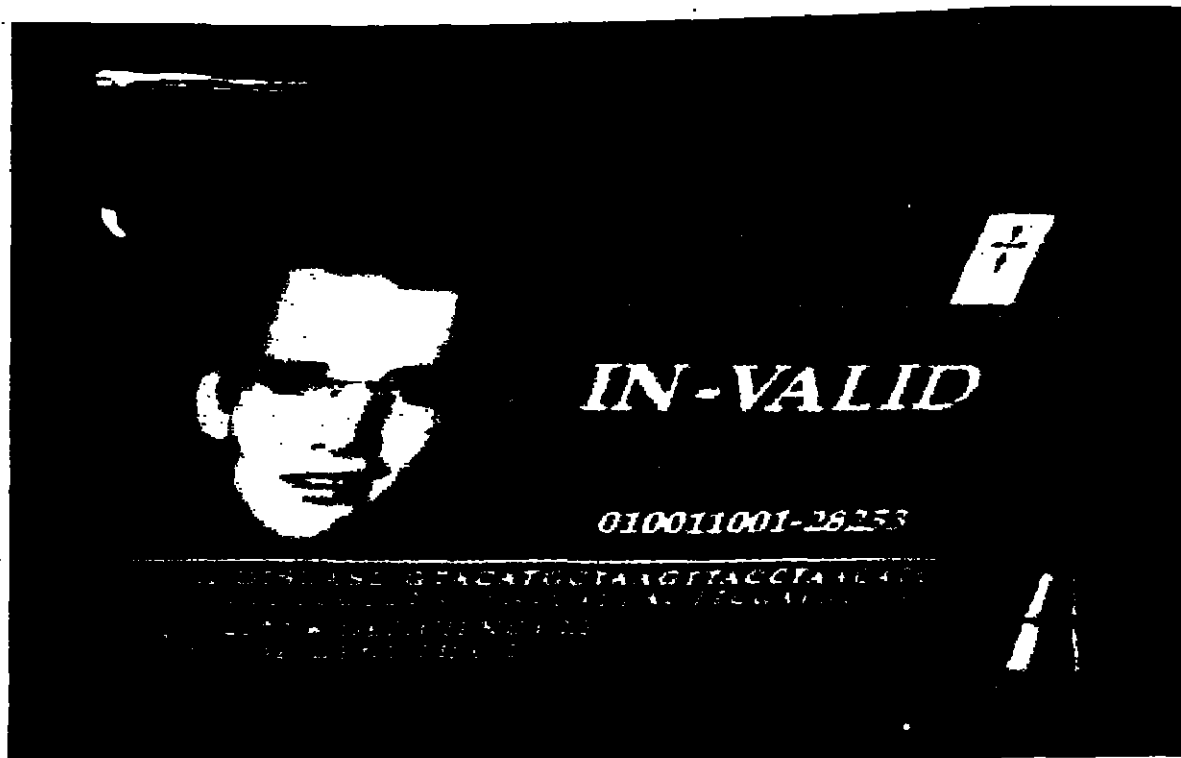
So, young Leonardo DiAaronovitch probably does not become a writer. And, aha! We move on to middle age, and by now I am probably ahead. I have settled down with a woman who is (by common consent) much better looking than I am. Brighter, too. But how might my Leonardo self have fared? He - I'm fairly sure - would be on his third marriage, leaving a trail of maladjusted children and vengeful ex-wives, all of whom simultaneously hate and adore him. Trapped into wedlock by a ruthless model at 26, it is all downhill from there. By the time we are both 45, I will be loads happier than my Leonardo alter ego.

And yet. A few minutes ago I took the lift down from the offices of the *Independent* to the concourse where they sell coffees of the most complex kinds. There were three young, okay-looking women and me. For 18 floors, and through three swing doors, we travelled together. And not one of them so much as glanced at me. I was invisible.

But Leonardo would not have been ignored. One would have smiled at him, one would have blushed, and the third would have brushed his thigh with hers. Bastard.

We have ways to make sure that your genes become your destiny

The world depicted in the cautionary film, *Gattaca*, is not far away, but says Tom Wilkie, we can still choose a different future



Are we heading towards a world in which people can be labelled 'in-valid' because their DNA isn't up to par?

I share a genetic defect with the lead character of *Gattaca*, the film about DNA-based discrimination which went on general release yesterday. It's a common condition, usually regarded as trivial, but I've always been sensitive about it. In the Orwellian world of *Gattaca*, set in the not-too-distant future, people like me would not be allowed. Or rather, we would be allotted a lowly place in the social and economic rungs of society, consigned by our genetic make-up to an untouchable caste.

Gattaca is a cool, stylish thriller set in a society where people have come to believe that DNA is destiny - that our futures can be mapped out in our genes. There is certainly precedent for that: no less a person than Jim Watson, the co-discoverer of the double helix of DNA itself, told *Time* magazine in 1989, "We used to think our destiny was in the stars. Now we know it's in our genes."

Into this society comes an impostor, Vincent Freeman, whose life ambition is to travel into space on a mission to Titan, the largest of Saturn's moons. But Vincent was conceived in the back seat of a car, and the roll of the DNA dice has left him short of the genetic gold standard required of astronauts. No efforts he can make by himself will remove the modern marks of Cain.

By the time of his younger brother, however, their parents' passion is under control and they conceive lots of embryos by in-vitro fertilisation (IVF), selecting only the genetically most healthy for implantation into the mother's womb. *Gattaca* is a world of designer babies, achieved not by sophisticated genetic engineering, but by a plausible extension of what is already being practiced. In Britain today, some embryos conceived through IVF are already having their genes checked and selectively implanted. This pre-implantation diagnosis is being carried out under strict regulation (in this country at least) and for the most honourable of motives. Some mothers at risk of having boys with the devastating genetic disorder Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy have elected to have only female embryos implanted because the disorder, like

haemophilia, is expressed only in males.

But in a little noticed speech just before Christmas, one of this country's outstanding geneticists, Professor Peter Goodfellow, told a meeting of the Genetic Interest Group (the support organisation for families with genetic disorders) that it might be possible within 20 years to read out not just a few disease-related genes during pre-implantation diagnosis, but an embryo's entire genetic make-up - blue eyes, fair hair, the lot. And not only would it be possible, it would be cheap. Science, it would appear, will imitate art.

In the film, to subvert the system and realise his ambition to "slip the surly bonds of Earth to touch the face of God", Vincent colludes with a champion athlete, Jerome, to use samples of Jerome's DNA to deceive the oppressive and all-pervasive identity checks. Vincent wears a pad containing Jerome's blood on his forefinger to beat the entry system to the space headquarters. Staff have to pass daily through turnstiles that automatically take a minute blood sample from a finger-prick and produce a DNA-fingerprint to check identity.

Here, art is imitating politics. In July 1996, Frank Field, now junior minister in the Department of Social Security, wrote a polemic in the *Sunday Mirror* advocating that benefits claimants should be genetically fingerprinted so as to avoid social security fraud: "Your number's up! Why DNA testing can beat the welfare cheats".

Jerome was born with all the best genes, but they did not protect him from a road accident that left him crippled, wheelchair-bound, and without a role in this brave new world. He fulfils his destiny vicariously by selling his genetic samples to

Vincent who officially becomes Jerome (who retreats to use his middle name, Eugene - a pun on eugenics meaning "well-born"). The name's hand-over is symbolic (Jerome means "sacred name") and the film's title too is a pun, deriving from the four key chemicals in DNA - guanine, adenine, thymine, and cytosine - whose acronym spells GTCA.

As the relationship between Vincent/Jerome and Jerome/Eugene grows beyond a mercantile one, questions of identity arise. In a society based on genetics, who is the real

sociologist of science Dorothy Nelkin and Susan Lindee. For page after page after page, they catalogue the obsession that contemporary culture has with genes and DNA.

Gattaca is a modern morality play on the errors of genetic determinism. Equally we should avoid the trap of technological determinism - of thinking that such a stylish but oppressive future is inevitable. For the truth is that such consequences are dependent not only on the scientific research but also upon the public policy response of society. If we or-

But that is not the end of the matter. Next week, the Wellcome Trust will announce a programme to spend £15m over the next five years examining the sorts of issues raised fictionally by *Gattaca*. Half the money will go on bringing such ethical issues to public attention. Two plays for secondary schools have already piloted the initiative: *The Gift*, on genetics; and *Cracked* on mental health.

The rest will go on research into the social and public policy consequences of biomedical advance, including understanding public attitudes and the values that inform public judgements on moral acceptability. The outputs of this research programme should help inform decision-makers at all levels about the appropriate policies to pursue in the light of developments in the laboratories and hospital clinics.

Most of the recent controversial scientific discoveries - Dolly for example - were the fruits of years of scientific research. Exploring their implications for society merits as serious an effort in social and policy research, rather than sound-bites and media punditry. That research may not lead to "the" answer, but it will map out some possible futures. Then it is up to society to decide.

And as for my genetic defect? That is a matter for me and my family. We do not live in the world of *Gattaca*. Yet.

Dr Tom Wilkie heads the biomedical ethics section at the Wellcome Trust.

Genes are not destiny, but they could become so if everyone starts believing that they are

Jerome? The individual who passes through the turnstile every morning or the man whose DNA profile passes the turnstiles? And what happens to sexual relationships in such a society? In one scene, people queue up to have DNA samples analysed - single strands of hair from potential lovers and partners - including one woman who has her lips swabbed to analyse the DNA of the man she kissed 20 minutes earlier, to see if she should take the relationship any further. Another nice touch is the helical staircase in the apartment shared by Vincent/Jerome and Jerome/Eugene.

Genes are not destiny, but they could become so if everyone starts believing that they are. Anyone who thinks the mindset of the world of *Gattaca* a tad implausible should turn to the excellent little book, *The DNA Mystique - the gene as a cultural icon* by the American

Arise, you barons of the regions and the cities



TREVOR
PHILLIPS
FAIR SHARES OF
THE NATIONAL PIE

IN THIS country, since the Magna Carta locked us all into a single kingdom, the only real remaining badge of regionalism is your telephone area code. But to prevent any development of the sort of regional loyalty that led to the Wars of the Roses, the Government cunningly keeps changing the telephone codes: for example having abolished London government they divided it into two parts - 0171 and 0181.

Now, it's all change again. In two years time, London, Cardiff, Northern Ireland and several other areas get new area codes, supposedly because of spiralling demand for new phone numbers. The phone companies tell us it's our own fault for wanting to use facsimiles, the Internet, separate lines for our teenage children, new burglar alarms

and the like. But they then spend every waking moment trying to sell us further exotic uses for fibre optic cables.

Do they think of the huge cost to phone subscribers when they make these decisions? This is not just about reprinting a few sheets of lavender notepaper. It is about telling eight million mothers, ten times each, that the number has changed. It is about the number of times you dial the wrong code and get that especially irritating voice telling you that you must dial again and you won't be charged. It is about the fact that whatever your new area code is, some estate agent will tell the newspapers that it's deeply unfashionable. And above all it is about Whitehall's determination to stop us identifying too closely with the regions in which we live.

However, there is a silver lining. Labour, though centralist by instinct, had a decentralising manifesto, to which it must, sometime, pay some attention. Even the phone companies are being brought into line. London, tragically divided between the 0171s and 0181 five years ago, will once again be reunited - ironically just about the time that the capital elects Mayor of London or somebody else Mayor of London. Perhaps the new Mayor will get to receive his first phone call of congratulations from the Prime Minister of Scotland, who will, if he is wise, be very nice indeed to his newly elected regional colleague. Other powerhouse regions - Cardiff in Wales, Manchester in the North-West, Birmingham in the Midlands can soon expect

to elect their own regional bosses. And this will not only change local government; it will change the dynamics of national government too.

That's because, as the Balkanisation of Britain picks up pace, the barons who lead the city regions of the UK will want to rewrite the Magna Carta. In this respect, the pre-eminent baron in the land will be the Mayor of London. He or she will represent a third of the UK's economic power; the south-east has nearly a quarter of the population, and is the most dynamic region in Europe. This powerhouse provides more than £6bn pounds worth of subsidy to the rest of the nation each year, according to a study by the distinguished economist Douglas McWilliams.

No less a figure than Ken Livingstone alluded, this week to the Scottish deficit with London. He wants London's new government to insist on getting its dosh back, even if it means defying national government; actually I suppose Ken would like it back especially if it meant defying a Labour Prime Minister. The argument for this reverse redistribution is that the money London gives away at the behest of national government could go a long way to solving the investment problems besetting London Transport, which has to defend a lumbering, dirty, technologically outdated underground service.

John Prescott, who happens to be in charge of transport, as well as regional policy, narrowed the options for the putative Mayor yesterday by proposing a mild version of the sort of sell-off that

the previous government so loved. He is looking for private investors to buy the tracks, while the public sector (presumably the new London government) holds on to passenger services. I would be surprised to see the private sector rushing to take on the tracks without the right either to force up ticket prices or to develop the enormously valuable sites around major tube stations. But it's a start. The true test of whether this strategy works will be if it delivers a few new stations in the transport desert known as South London.

Of course, the basic point is that this sort of policy should not be coming from the mouth of the Deputy Prime Minister at all; he should not have to worry about the fate of any one region, even one as important as London. It should be the capital's own leaders who decide which parts of the transport system most need resuscitation, how it can be done, and which partners London can tolerate. The same should go for Newcastle, Leeds, Birmingham and Bristol.

But some in the political classes have serious reservations about this. The eyes of the most sophisticated political observers are turning to the success of regional parties in rich parts of Europe and North America, increasingly restive about having to bear the burden of supporting less favoured or less enterprising areas. In California, they worry about immigration, not just from the *favelas* of Mexico, but from trailer parks in Nevada and Arizona; in Milan, they vote for the Northern league to fend

off the Sicilians as much as the North Africans; and in Munich, it is a toss-up as to whether they loathe the East Berliners more than the Turks.

In the name of democracy, our government is giving expression to these trends, which is on balance, smarter than trying to suppress them. But Westminster's politicians have to be aware that the further they go towards developing the power of regions, the more they weaken their own strategic influence and their capacity to fight the local barons.

Saying to Scots that they must play the game Westminster's way is one thing - Edinburgh knows that without that connection they would be hard put to pay the bills for their excellent schools, maintained on a pile of southern English spondulicks. It would be hard to make the same case to a region which has an economy bigger than Switzerland's and on the success of which the rest of the country relies.

The politicians of central government are caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, they want to give more power to the people; but on the other, the last thing they need is a clutch of powerful baronies which will both wage war on each other and blame Westminster for every pothole on their patch.

So where should the balance of power lie? Sooner, rather than later, as the barons gather their forces, the Government is going to have to make clear what its new Magna Carta looks like; and I bet they can see the writing on the wall already. It says: "All power to the regions."

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Chaos as FTSE soars past 6,000 to push top UK companies' value above £1 trillion

By Andrew Verity

INSTITUTIONAL investors yesterday angrily criticised the Stock Exchange's order-driven trading system, taking the shine off a surge in the FTSE 100 index of leading shares, which soared past the 6,000 mark for the first time yesterday.

The rise, which later fell away in a volatile day's trading, saw Britain's biggest companies valued for the first time at more than £1 trillion.

FTSE International, the company which publishes the index of leading shares, was forced to suspend the FTSE 100 for five minutes after rogue trades went through at as little as one-third of the market price.

Institutions privately said wild fluctuations, which saw the index swing by 230 points, had discredited the entire system. One large fund manager, which handles billions of pounds of index-tracking funds, said it would protest to the Stock Exchange.

In just 15 seconds, between 10.15 and 10.16, the index plunged by 160 points, only to soar by 140 points before the minute was up.

Traders were unable to see the fluctuation as FTSE International had suspended the index between 10.15 and 10.20. The index was then recalculated without including two rogue trades in British Gas shares.

It is understood that in one bogus trade, 50,000 BG shares were traded at 108p, just over a third of the more normal BG price of 302p. In the same minute between 10.15 and 10.16, a further 150,000 BG shares were sold at 200p.

Stephen Vale, spokesman for FTSE International, said the trades were "out of line with previous trades in the stock and broke the automatic param-

eters". It is believed to be the first time the FTSE 100 has been suspended since the Stock Exchange introduced its order-driven trading system last October.

A spokeswoman for one well-known fund manager, which handles billions of pounds in funds designed to track the index, said: "It is a bit of a funny system that can actually allow something like that to happen. The fact that you can have prices moving around like that - and you can't trade effectively - doesn't do the system any credit."

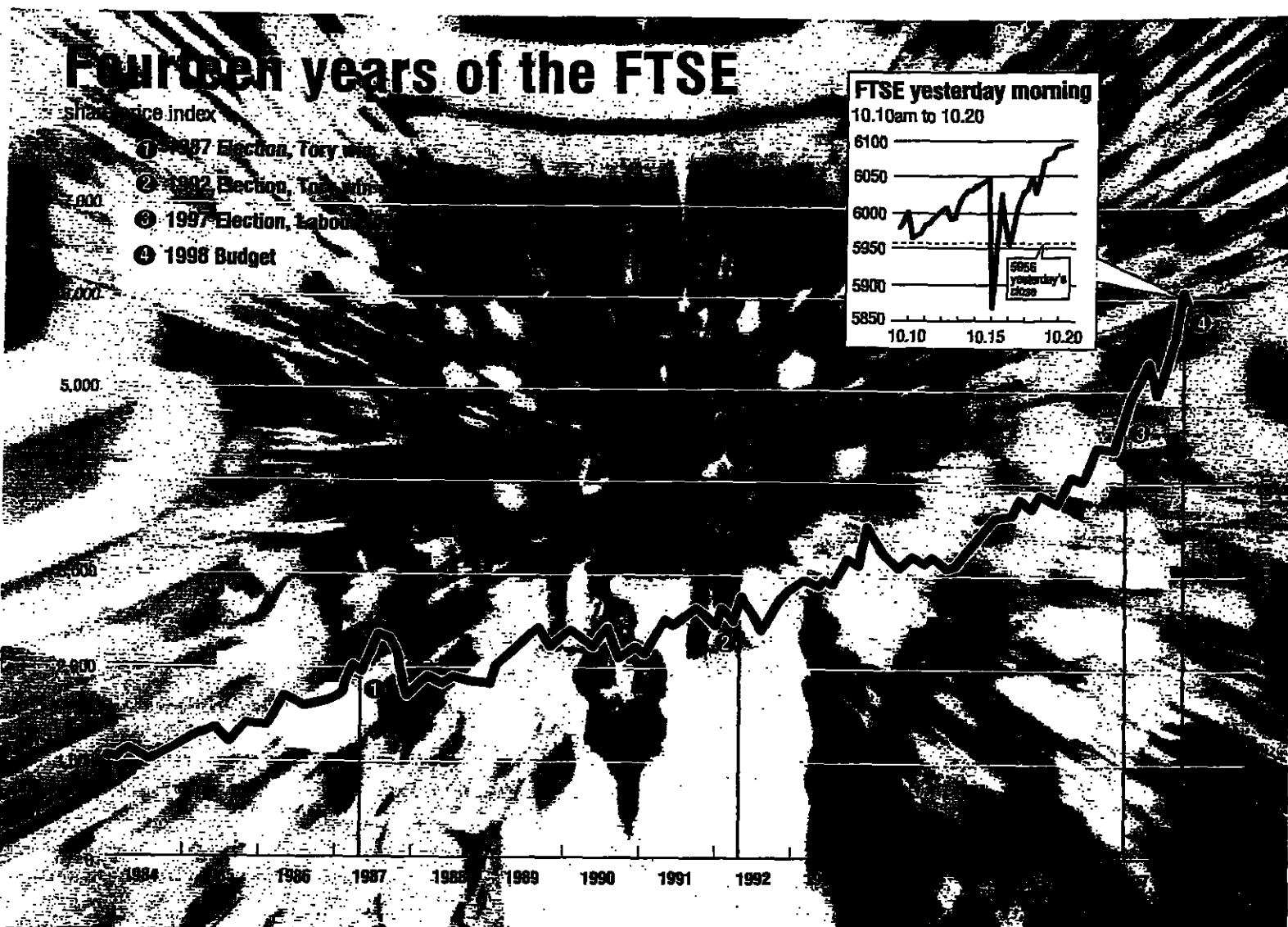
The wild fluctuations happened in the 20 minutes between 10.10am and 10.30am, the official period when futures contracts on the FTSE - financial instruments used to bet on market movements - were due to expire. Trading was at four times its normal volume on expiry dates.

Trading screens turned from a block of blue into a sea of red at the blink of an eye, rising at one point to achieve a 107 point gain before plunging to register a 117 point deficit.

The basket trades came in so quickly that stock exchange information systems simply failed to keep up. At one point, Reuters and Bloomberg screens differed by 150 points in the level they gave for the FTSE 100.

Simon Fine, UK equity strategist at Kleinwort Benson, said: "Both the futures and the options were expiring on a lot of volatility. Obviously someone had a quite large exposure which has caused the volatility."

Market sources said the volatility was caused by a pitched battle between investment banks as the futures contracts expired. Wave after wave of "basket trades" - simultaneous trades in every company in the FTSE 100 - sent the index soaring and plummeting.



Goldman Sachs, the giant American investment bank, was seen as a big seller of stocks, while other investment banks were net buyers.

Traders said Goldman Sachs was believed to have had a giant short position on FTSE futures, effectively betting that the index would be lower than others thought. It was selling shares which it had bought to hedge

this position. The volume of sales put downward pressure on the FTSE.

The Stock Exchange's order-driven trading system normally suspends trades which are more than 20 per cent above or below the opening price - or the last order book trade. But this rule is lifted during the expiry period for FTSE futures.

In December last year, the

Stock Exchange slapped a record fine of £350,000 on JP Morgan Securities for stock manipulation. The fine followed an investigation into suspicious trading on 28 November, which found the firm had violated rules which outlawed attempts to manipulate the index.

Market sources believe the rogue trades yesterday could have been caused by a mistake, rather than deliberate manipulation.

The surge in the FTSE was fuelled by a widespread belief that investors would invest heavily in Personal Equity Plans (PEPs) following the Budget. On Tuesday, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, ended fears that PEP savings made before April next

year would be limited to a total of £50,000.

The FTSE momentarily hit 6,105 - a record level which values the top 100 companies at over £1,000 billion - before plunging to 5,880 and settling at 6,042.

After Wall Street opened, shares came off sharply and closed at 5,956.3, down 41.6 on the day.

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Shake-up of NICs could drive engineers abroad

By Andrew Verity

ENGINEERING companies are seriously considering leaving the country because of the Government's shake-up of National Insurance, announced in the Budget on Tuesday.

The Engineering Employers Federation said the increase in employers' National Insurance contributions (NICs) - which will rise from 10 to 12.2 per cent on all pay above £210 a week - had prompted some members to consider moving elsewhere.

One well-known company, which did not wish to be named, has already warned Martin Taylor, the Barclays chief executive who is conducting a review of tax and benefits, that it might leave the country if his proposals were implemented.

The proposals for reform of NICs came in a report by Mr Taylor, published on the same day as the Budget, and will be implemented in April next year.

Under the Budget a progressive system of employers' contributions, rising in steps from 3 per cent at £61 to 10 per cent at £210, will be replaced by a single rate of 12.2 per cent on earnings above £81 a week.

While low-paying employers will pay less for most employees paid less than £450 a week, those paying higher wages will pay more. Wages of £800 a week - common in the hi-tech engineering sector - would incur an extra £7.84 in NICs.

David Yeandle, head of employment affairs at the EEF, said: "We see this predominantly as a bad thing for our sector. If it's going to be revenue-neutral for the Chancellor it is not going to be cost-neutral for the hi-tech industry. It is particularly difficult for those employing lots of high-paid people."

"I haven't seen anything to justify this which would provide more jobs. It is unlikely to create any new jobs in the engineering sector. We don't believe that companies make decisions about taking people on because of these relatively marginal effects."

The engineers said there was too little time to consult on the proposals, which were first revealed in February in an informal consultation by Mr Taylor.

The CBI has also warned that the effects on high-paying employers will be to impose an additional burden at a time when exports are already being squeezed by the strong pound.

Savoy bidding war may leave hotel group in US hands

By Andrew Yates

THE SAVOY HOTEL, one of the most prestigious in Britain, could fall into American hands, it emerged yesterday. The Savoy Group, which owns a string of up-market hotels including Claridge's, The Connaught and The Berkeley as well as the Savoy, admitted it was in takeover talks with a number of buyers.

Several American hotel groups are leading candidates to acquire the group. The City expects a bidding war for the group which could push its price well above the £500m mark.

Starwood Lodging and Mediterra, two ambitious hotel groups which have used their special tax status in the US to expand rapidly, are among the front-runners to buy the luxury hotels, although at least five bids are believed to have been submitted for the group.

Negotiations are still continuing and a deal could be tied up within the next few weeks.

The Wontner family which has controlled the Savoy since

1953 has staunchly resisted offers to buy the hotels in the past but in a dramatic change of heart are now understood to be willing to sell.

A deal would be good news for Granada, the hotels and media giant, which inherited a 68 per cent stake in Savoy after it acquired Forte in a bitter takeover battle. Granada have been looking to sell their stake for some time, but a deal has proved difficult as the stake only carries 42 per cent of the voting rights. Granada is believed to be seeking some of its other up-market hotels including Grosvenor House as part of the takeover package.

Savoy's share price jumped 25p to 175p and Granada's share price leapt 3p to 103p. Any buyer is likely to retain Ramon Pajares, the managing director of Savoy Group who is credited with transforming the financial fortunes of the company over the last few years. A takeover will also further the Savoy Group's plans to open new hotels throughout continental Europe. The Savoy is expected to unveil pre-tax profits of around £20m when it unveils annual results next Tuesday.



Mike Blackburn earned £824,000 last year

Halifax chief doubles his money in first year on the market

By Michael Harrison

MIKE BLACKBURN, the chief executive of the Halifax, was paid £824,000 last year, including a bonus of more than £300,000 for helping steer its conversion from a building society into a bank.

Halifax's annual report and accounts, posted to shareholders yesterday, shows that its eight executive directors shared in a bonus pool of £1.064m linked to the £20bn flotation last June, the biggest ever conversion of a mutual society.

Roger Boyes, the Halifax's finance director, and Gren Gollwell, its deputy chief executive,

each received flotation bonuses of £178,000.

Mr Blackburn's £823,930 pay packet last year represented an increase of 108 per cent on the previous year. It was made up of £421,951 in basic pay and benefits, an annual bonus of £293,500 and a medium term bonus of £308,477.

This last element was based over a 23-month period and reflected the successful flotation and Halifax's implementation of efficiency, new technology and cost and capital allocation programmes.

His pay for the previous year, when Halifax was still mutually

owned, was £395,817. However, this figure did not include any medium term bonus.

Halifax said that if the bonus has been spread evenly across the two years then the change in salary would have been from £577,000 to £676,000 - an increase of 17 per cent.

Total board pay for 1997 was £3.74m compared with £1.93m in 1996. However, again, the figures are distorted by the non-payment of medium term bonus in 1996.

The Halifax flotation produced the biggest windfall of the year and lifted conversion proceeds to more than £30bn, un-

leashing a huge wave of consumer spending. The 7.5 million Halifax members received payouts averaging £2,400 each.

The conversion involved the checking of 30 million accounts and a mail of 32 million items - the largest single mailing ever undertaken by the Royal Mail. The Halifax received an estimated 9 million telephone inquiries and 300,000 letters.

Profits before tax in 1997 were £1.6bn against £928m the previous year although 1996 included a large one-off exceptional item. The Halifax ended the year by announcing a £1bn buy back of shares.

Texaco in talks to sell gas supply business

By Michael Harrison

TEXACO has put its long-term commitment to the UK gas market in doubt by hoisting a "for sale" sign over its industrial and commercial gas business.

A Texaco spokeswoman confirmed yesterday the company had begun talks with a number of potential buyers for Texaco Natural Gas, which is among Britain's top 10 gas suppliers.

"It is very early stages yet and we have only just started talking to other companies," she added. The 50 staff of Texaco Natural Gas were told earlier this week about the decision to sell the business.

"A strategic review was undertaken and as a result Texaco decided to focus on its core business," the spokeswoman said.

Texaco stressed that the move would not directly affect Calor, its joint venture domestic gas business.

Industry observers believe that Texaco may ultimately decide to withdraw also from the UK domestic gas market.

Calor is Britain's second biggest independent supplier to the domestic market and is 50 per cent owned by Texaco. The remaining 50 per cent is owned by Nuon, the Dutch multi-utility and Calor.

Calor has picked up 210,000 of the 1.1m customers that have switched from British Gas as competition is rolled out nationwide. The electricity company Eastern is the biggest independent supplier to the domestic gas market with 300,000 customers and the third biggest player in the business gas market with a 13 per cent share.

The company is aiming for two million gas customers by 2000 although many of these are likely to be its existing electricity customers. The company plans to announce next week how many of its domestic electricity customers it has signed up to take gas.

United Carriers chief opts for a novel career

JOHN TOYNE has walked out on a 35-year business career, the last three years as managing director of United Carriers, in order to write novels.

Mr Toyne spoke from his Northampton home yesterday about his decision to abandon senior management in favour of a literary career.

"It's been on my mind to do this for a long time," he said. "I've spoken about it to my colleagues for the last 18 months. I'm 55 this year and now's my chance to write on a full time basis."

"You're talking to an ex-

tremely happy person," Mr Toyne added.

Doug Rogers, chairman of United Carriers, will add Mr Toyne's responsibilities to his existing ones. United is a domestic parcel carrying group based in Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.

Mr Toyne doesn't actually have a publisher yet, but he has appeared in print before, about 20 years ago.

"When I was a young man I got some short stories published in magazines. Now I'm working on an amusing business novel and a thriller. I also have about six other pro-

jects on the go," said Mr Toyne.

He was unfazed by the lack of a publisher so far. "You've got to start somewhere," he said.

Mr Toyne, whose favourite author is Anthony Burgess, led an MBO at Lowfield Distributors seven years ago, and almost ran off to be an author then. But he realised he wanted a few more years in the world of Mammon.

Did he worry that he would be lonely in his new career? "Being an MD is an extremely lonely job," he replied. "I like my own company and I'm fairly well motivated."

A day in the markets

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change %	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield %
FTSE 100	5956.30	-41.60	-0.69	5997.30	4182.10	3.24
FTSE 250	5616.00	-49.60	-0.88	5667.20	4384.20	2.60
FTSE 350	2860.80	-11.50	-0.40	2872.30	2073.70	3.16
FTSE All Share	2788.02	-9.31	-0.33	2797.33	2065.07	3.13
FTSE SmallCap	2607.90	17.50	0.68	2690.40	2182.10	2.88
FTSE FTSE100	1405.10	5.00	0.36	1400.10	1226.20	3.09
FTSE AIM	1050.50	3.50	0.34	1111.20	965.90	0.96
Dow Jones	8538.77	31.44	0.36	8603.05	8356.78	1.58
Nikkei	16830.47	151.45	0.91	20910.79	14488.21	0.91
Hang Seng	11554.28	119.19	1.04	16820.31	7909.13	3.34
Dax	5001.55	65.23	1.32	4949.86	3192.33	1.56

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling					UK 10 year gilt					US long bond				
3 months	1 yr	5 yr	10 yr	% chg	1 yr	5 yr	10 yr	% chg	1 yr	5 yr	10 yr	% chg		
UK	7.58	1.10	7.50	0.99	5.91	-1.74	5.84	-1.88						
US	5.69	-0.03	5.81	-0.35	5.57	-1.16	5.86	-1.07						
Japan	0.70	0.07	0.66	-0.02	1.81	-0.84	2.37	-0.78						
Germany	3.52	0.24	3.78	0.34	4.87	-1.06	5.43	-1.28						

MAIN PRICE CHANGES			
Richest	Price bid	Ask	% Diff
Savoy Hotel	1750.00	255.00	17.06
Sumitomo	381.50	33.00	11.06
Bank of China	381.50	33.00	11.06
Bank of America	228.50	13.50	6.34

Falls	Price bid	Ask	% Diff
Sun Life	588.28	43.25	-7.74
Assoy Bk Food	615.00	43.00	-6.83
Banco Portugues	154.00	-10.00	-6.10
Prudential Corp	905.50	-51.50	-5.38

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
1.6675 0.08% 1.6725	1.9325 0.00% 1.9375	160.00 0.00% 160.00
Dollar 1.6675 0.08% 1.6725	DM 1.9325 0.00% 1.9375	¥ 160.00 0.00% 160.00
£/DM 0.5345 0.00% 0.5395	£/¥ 0.0062 0.00% 0.0062	DM/¥ 0.0125 0.00% 0.0125
£/DM 0.5345 0.00% 0.5395	£/¥ 0.0062 0.00% 0.0062	DM/¥ 0.0125 0.00% 0.0125

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.4234	Italy (lira)	2.920
Austria (schillings)	20.75	Japan (yen)	203.59
Belgium (francs)	60.96	Malta (lira)	0.6375
Canada (\$)	2.2964	Netherlands (guilders)	3.3275
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8585	Norway (kroner)	12.35
Denmark (kroner)	11.34	Portugal (escudos)	300.10
Finland (markka)	9.0287	Spain (pesetas)	249.72
France (francs)	9.8954	South Africa (rand)	7.9361
Germany (marks)	2.9621	Sweden (kroner)	12.96
Greece (drachmas)	521.31	Switzerland (francs)	2.422
Hong Kong (\$)	12.49	Turkey (lira)	380.59
Ireland (pounds)	1.7445	USA (\$)	1.6238

Source: Thomson Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

سوق المال



JEREMY
WARNER

ON WHY IT WOULD
HAVE BEEN BEST TO
PRIVATISE THE TUBE
OUTRIGHT. THE
ARGOS DEFENCE,
AND SHENANIGANS
AT NEWCASTLE
UNITED

Why Prescott's got it all wrong over the Tube

SINCE New Labour is philosophically founded on the idea of the "middle" or "third" way - neither old right nor old left but New Labour - it is hardly surprising that we find the same rhetoric constantly cropping up in policy. John Prescott, our "give you a good belting" Deputy Prime Minister, was at it again yesterday, promising a third way approach for dealing with the problem of under investment in London's Underground system.

What he's proposing is neither privatisation nor nationalisation but somewhere in between. The job of running, investing in, and maintaining the Tube's crumbling infrastructure is to be let out to private sector operators. For their trouble, they will be paid an annual fee from London Underground, which will remain in the public sector.

Our transport correspondent, Randeep Ramesh, thinks this is a thoroughly sensible, and quite clever, solution, allowing the tube to gain the benefits of private sector efficiencies while at the same time maintaining full public sector accountability and control. Perhaps more important, it will also allow the heavy costs of the investment needed to revive the underground to be spread over a 10 to 20-year period. Classic private finance initiative stuff, in other words.

I can see these arguments, but funda-

mentally I disagree. Actually this is not the modern, clever, third way it pretends to be at all, but a good old fashioned compromise, a messy and unnecessary fudge born out of political dogma as much as anything else. The ultimate cost to the taxpayer is virtually certain to be a good deal higher than either of the alternatives, privatisation or fully fledged public control. Like most things bought on the never-never, you don't notice it until years later when you tot up the costs and realise the full horror of your folly. Fortunately for Mr Prescott, by that stage he'll be long past caring.

The most sensible approach would always have been to privatise the Tube outright. The money raised by floating it would have funded the necessary investment and some, and the public sector would for ever have rid itself of the costs of the capital transport system. That was perhaps never going to happen after all Labour said in opposition about privatisation of the railways. These old Labour objections to the concept of privatised utilities are reinforced in Mr Prescott's mind by the fear of being responsible for a fat cat profit. Privatisation, whatever its benefits, nearly always involves some degree of top slicing by the City and its friends. Politically, Mr Prescott would never have been able to stomach being involved in another privatisation giveaway.

On the other hand, the public sector solution was always going to run up against meany Gordon Brown at the Treasury. Mr Prescott has managed to squeeze another £500m for his department out of the Chancellor for next year, most of which will be spent on keeping the Underground up and running. But it's not enough, not nearly enough. Hence, the PFI "third way".

Don't be conned. The idea that this provides a solution is just accounting mumbo jumbo. It gets the capital costs off the Exchequer's books and allows them to be spread over a prolonged period of time, but one way or another we still pay. Moreover, because the private sector has a higher cost of capital than the public, and always demands a return, the cost is likely to be higher. One way or another, the fat cats are going to have their cream. The PFI merely forces them to think of ingenious new ways of doing it. This is not the right solution, and in his heart, Mr Prescott probably knows it.

THE BATTLE for control of Argos, the catalogue retailer, has so far been one of the dullest hostile takeover bids in recent memory. After a novel first over, when it emerged that owing to illness and fatigue, Argos had neither a chief executive nor a finance director, the innings has settled into one of stultifying boredom.

Thankfully, the phoney war is about to

come to an end. Assuming Mrs Blockit doesn't rain the whole thing off by dis-patching Lord Wolfson's £1.6bn bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, we can expect the pace to quicken a bit over the next few weeks. Mind you, the above possibility shouldn't be wholly discounted.

On conventional competition criteria, there's not much of a case for referring GUS's bid. GUS has a dominant market share of conventional agency mail order, but it's not in Argos style retailing at all. Even so, officials at the Office of Fair Trading have been impressed by the argument that the deal should be judged more on whether it harms the consumer than on traditional market share assessments.

A comparison of the two catalogues reveals that Argos is a good deal cheaper on many items than GUS. Furthermore, Argos is planning a big push into home shopping (the modern day equivalent of mail order). So it's reasonable to contend that the takeover would remove a big slug of actual and potential price competition from the market.

All the same, the argument is a long shot and in any case Argos would be foolish to make an MMC reference the main plank of its defence. Stuart Rose, the new chief executive, would get no thanks from the City for that.

Instead this former stalwart of M&S

is planning to kick off the serious part of his defence next week with a series of presentations in which he will robustly challenge the idea that Argos is over the hill. Argos badly disappointed expectations last year, and there is little doubt management had become overly sleepy and complacent.

But the concept is still a supremely successful one which up until last year had consistently delivered double digit revenue and profits growth. There's no reason it shouldn't do so again. The financial pyrotechnics - a big special dividend and profits forecast - come later. My guess is that Lord Wolfson is going to have to pay a minimum 650p a share to be assured of success. Given that his opening shot is only 570p, he's going to have to bite hard on his pride to pay it.

I FIRST MET John Mayo when he was working as an SG Warburg corporate financier on the demerger of ICI and Zeneca. He's a clever, talented man and he's deserved his success, first at Zeneca and now as finance director of GEC. So what possessed him to join the board of Newcastle United, whose corporate affairs seem richly to deserve the team's nickname, the magpies, is something of a mystery. The inevitable reckoning has come sooner than even I could have predicted. If he is to salvage his City reputation, Mr Mayo must either fire the club's wayward directors, or resign himself.

Umbro sacks US workforce to stave off financial crisis

By Andrew Yates

UMBRO, the US-owned British sportswear group, is relocating its head office to Manchester and sacking virtually its entire workforce in America in order to stave off a financial crisis which has threatened the group's future.

The decision to slash costs is a concerted effort to return the group to a stable financial footing. The move is likely to mean Umbro will be able to retain the contract to supply the England football kit.

Umbro has decided to shut down its sales operation in the US, having already announced the closure of its manufacturing facilities over there, which will result in the total loss of more than 500 jobs. It is close to securing a licensing partner in the US which will market all its products.

Umbro is also close to announcing a buyer for its sportswear factories in Merseyside and Stoke-on-Trent which will save more than 100 jobs in the UK. The manufacturing facilities were another casualty of Umbro's financial woes.

The Football Association had originally awarded Umbro a new £50m contract to supply the England team's kit for the next four years, to run after its current contract comes up for renewal in July 1999. Growing concerns about the group's financial stability put that

decision in doubt. Industry sources believe the deal is all but done.

Umbro, which is owned by Stone Manufacturing, a family-run American sportswear business, will now be run operationally from the UK, although it will retain a board in the US. The group paid the penalty for expanding too fast which knocked a hole in its cash-flow. The American division made a sizeable loss last year, although its UK business remains profitable.

Umbro has secured the support of its bankers during its difficult trading period and denied rumours that it had been forced to pursue bankruptcy proceedings in the US.

Manchester United, which also uses Umbro's kit, said yesterday that it was keen to retain the group's services. Martin Edwards, the club's chief executive said: "We are happy with Umbro. We have a contract with them for the next four years and do not see any problem with that."

Umbro is now looking to take advantage of the rapid growth in the European sports market. It also pledged £500,000 yesterday to help England bid to host the World Cup in 2006. It has thrown its weight behind a multi-million campaign that is also being endorsed by British Airways, Littlewoods, Marks & Spencer and Nationwide.



Kitted out: Manchester United said its contract with Umbro would continue

Man Utd targets the high street

MANCHESTER United, Britain's most popular football club, is talking to big sports retailers about setting up a series of "shop-within-shops" on the high street, writes Andrew Yates.

The mini-shops would comprise a large area within an existing retail outlets devoted to United's merchandise, including anything from key rings and mugs to trackuits and football shirts.

The club is also hoping to set up retail outlets in the Far East as it tries to cash in on its large fan base in the region. It is looking to open a mixture of stand-alone shops as well as teaming up with local retailers to provide new formats within their stores. The initiative is part of a strong push to sell its strong brand name overseas. The introduction of stand alone shops abroad raises the possibility that the club will eventually introduce similar stores in the UK if the experiment proves successful.

Martin Edwards, chief executive of the club, confirmed yesterday that the club was talking to large sports chains in the UK about forming a retail partnership.

"We are talking to retailers but nothing has yet been decided," he said.

The competition to join forces with United is likely to be intense. JJB Sports, JD Sports and Sports Division are all likely to be interested in a deal.

UK Safety shares plunge as managers make offer

Shares in debt-laden UK Safety plunged yesterday after the company recommended a 2.5p a share cash bid from a management buy-out vehicle. The offer, backed by venture capital boutique Alchemy Partners, values the industrial footwear group at £1.01m, a 66.7 per cent discount to its value of £3.03m at close of trading on Thursday. UK Safety shares closed last night at 4.75p, down 2.75p. The MBO team comprises John Newman, chief executive, Paul Cockburn, production director and Ken Elavia sales and marketing director.

Anthony Mitchell, the company's non-executive chairman said: "The independent directors consider that acceptance of the offer is the best option for shareholders to secure some return on their investment."

JBA profits dip

JBA Holdings, the software company whose shares halved on a profits warning last month, yesterday reported a dip in profits for the first time in 16 years and said it was shifting its strategy to achieve long-term growth. The company announced pre-tax profits fell to £5.2m from £11.3m in the previous year despite a 37 per cent hike in revenue growth to £221.7m from £161.8m. JBA shares fell another 7.5p yesterday to close at 635p.

Supermarket shares jump

Shares in Sainsbury's and Kwik Save, the supermarket groups, jumped after they announced their recommended merger was now unconditional in all respects. Sainsbury's and Kwik Save announced plans for a £1.3bn merger on 19 February, aiming to be the leading high street supermarket chain. On completion of merger, Kwik Save becomes a subsidiary of Sainsbury's. Sainsbury's closed up 33p at 331.5p, while Kwik Save gained 36p to end the day on 381.5p.

BAA wins Aussie franchise

British airport operators have been awarded franchises to run a further four airports in Australia. BAA, which already has an equity stake in Melbourne airport, is part of a consortium chosen to operate Launceston airport in Tasmania. Manchester Airport is a member of the consortium selected to take over Adelaide, Coolangubra and Parafield airports.

Swallowfield

In our report on the annual results of Swallowfield, the toiletries and cosmetics group, in yesterday's *Independent* which accompanied a photograph of Tony Wardell, managing director, being given a shave at a London barber shop, we identified Mr Wardell as Bill Otley, the chairman. We apologise for any embarrassment caused.

Central Bank squabbles likely to dominate European get-together

Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, previews the meeting of finance ministers

THE MEETING of European finance ministers in York kicked off last night with a dinner in the picturesque surroundings of the National Railway Museum.

The formal agenda of the meeting, which is likely to be overshadowed by squabbles over the make-up of the European Central Bank (ECB), will be dominated by Gordon Brown's launch of a joint European initiative for the troubled Asian economies. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will propose a joint EU and Asian

centre for financial restructuring, intended to create a network of technical assistance in areas such as accountancy and law.

Against the background of a planned rally by Euro-sceptic organisations, the main issue on the European front will be increasing competition and completing the single market in financial services. Mr Brown will urge structural reform of the capital and goods markets to guarantee the success of the

single European currency. Other items on the agenda include the extension of EU membership to the countries of central and eastern Europe, and the spillover from the Asian crisis to the European economy.

The real excitement is likely to take place in the margins of the meeting, with the continuing wrangle over who should head the ECB. The candidacy of the initial front-runner, Wim

Duisenberg of the Netherlands, was called into question when the French proposed Jean-Claude Trichet, governor of the Banque de France.

The French also insisted earlier this week that three of the six seats on the ECB board should be reserved for Germany, France and Italy. This has upset the Spanish, while the UK is unhappy that it has not won a guaranteed seat when it eventually joins.

Six months ago, this week-end's gathering was seen as the key meeting for making the decisions on which countries could join EMU and at what rates their national currencies would be exchanged for euros from 1 January 1999.

Next week the European Commission and the European Monetary Institute - forerunner of the ECB - will publish their reports on whether aspirants have met

the criteria set out in the Maastricht Treaty.

The Commission is expected to rubber-stamp the politicians' conclusion that there will be 11 members in the first wave, only Denmark, Greece, Sweden and the UK remaining outside. The EMI might raise doubts over whether Italy has genuinely achieved convergence with the other economies.

Among academics and in the financial markets, the presumption is that there is no derailling the EMU train. No financial market disruption is expected.

WHO'S SUING WHO

JOHN
WILLCOCK



TRUSTOR, the Swedish investment company which suffered the disappearance of £48 million last year, has applied to the High Court in London for an order to prevent Jonathan Guinness, former chairman of Trustor, from removing any of his assets from England and Wales, up to the value of £40 million.

The Swedish company has included St. Crispin Trading A.B. in the same writ. Baron Moyne has said he has sold his 52 per cent stake in Trustor last November to St. Crispin, a company registered in the Virgin Islands.

Trustor has issued a second writ against another eight parties, claiming compensation and damages over the affair. The company is claiming "damages for funds" from four of these parties: Lindsay Smallbone, Baron Moyne's long-time adviser, who became managing director of Trustor when Baron Moyne joined the company last June; Introcom (International) Ltd, a

firm registered in Gibraltar; Thomas Jisander, a Swedish adviser to Baron Moyne who has been arrested in Sweden over the affair; and Joachim Posner, also known as Joe Falk, a convicted fraudster based in Barbados who is currently being sought by the Swedish police.

Trustor includes four other parties in the second writ, whom it is suing for compensation over its losses: Guinness Management Limited, of Baker Street, London; M & A Financial Services of Lansdowne House, Berkeley Square, London; Yumi-na Trading Corporation, based in Panama, and CMB Change Mont Blanc Finance SA, a company based in Geneva.

Both Lord Moyne and Mr Smallbone have protested their innocence in the affair, saying they were used as a front for Swedish business associates who were responsible for the money's disappearance.

The first Trustor writ against Baron Moyne and St. Crispin Trading seeks an order that he does not "remove from Eng-

land and Wales or in any way dispose of or deal with or diminish the value of any of their respective assets which are in England and Wales whether in their own respective names or not and whether solely or jointly owned up to the value of £40,000,000."

The writ adds that order, if granted, "does not prohibit the First Defendant (Baron Moyne) from spending up to £1,000 a week towards his ordinary living expenses and does not prohibit either Defendant from spending a reasonable sum on legal advice and representation."

Allen & Overy, the City law firm, is acting on behalf of Trustor.

A CONCERT producer and director is suing the Spice Girls for a total of nearly £350,000 after the girl band sacked him last November. Gregory Lynn, who trades as "Adrenalin" and is based in Twickenham, claims that he signed an agreement with the band on 17 September 1997 "to act as the

director and producer of concerts to be performed by the artists 'The Spice Girls'."

The agreement covered the live concert tour which started on 16 February 1998 and which is due to end on 31 December this year, Mr Lynn's writ claims.

The director goes on to list the sums he claims he is owed under the deal, including design and development fees and a weekly £5,000 production fee. Mr Lynn says that the band faxed him a letter on 14 November 1997 which "summarily terminated the Plaintiff's engagement and thereby repudiated the agreement."

THE UNDER Sheriff of London and the Under-Sheriff of Surrey are suing their own agents, Nathan & Co (Sheriffs Officers) Ltd, over a series of disputed payments.

The Sheriffs are seeking an "account of all monies received by the Defendant since 1st April 1996 as agent for the First Plaintiff on behalf of the High Sheriff of Greater London and as agent for the Second Plaintiff

on behalf of the High Sheriff of Surrey."

The writ demands the payment of all money received by Nathan & Co when it acted as agent for the Sheriffs and which it has not already handed over to them.

The Sheriffs have launched their legal action through Jacobsons, a law firm based in The Outer Temple, London.

RADCLIFFES, a law firm based in Westminster, London, is seeking "a declaration as to the true ownership of the sum of US\$7,312,414.29 standing to the credit of client account No. 11191306 in the name of the Plaintiff at Lloyds Bank, Butler Place branch, Cannon Street, Westminster, London."

Radcliffes has named nine defendants in the writ, including The Woodborough Corporation of the Isle of Man; Newport Enterprises of Antwerp; Trans Capital of New Zealand; JSW of Texas; Growth Management Group of North Carolina; The Sovereign Group of the Cayman Islands; and Jean-Yves Henault of Brive, France.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Deutsche Bank (F)	4,77m (6.67m)	0.68m (1.3m)	0.77p (2.57p)	0.1p (0.2p)
Deutsche Holdings (F)	7,14m (7.7m)	-0.87m (-0.56m)	-1.3p (-0.8p)	nil
Edinburgh City (F)	4,37m (3.8m)	0.64m (0.50m)	1.84p (1.45p)	0.2p (0.75p)
Fortress & Mann (F)	21,72m (21.7m)	2,01m (2.47m)	14.8p (17.4p)	4.3p (4.3p)
JBA Holdings (F)	221.7m (161.8m)	5.2m (11.2m)	10.1p (18.3p)	5.1p (5.1p)
Johnson Sp. (F)	177.3m (178.5m)	17.4m (18.8m)	18.84p (24.58p)	12.5p (11.8p)
Millar (F)	nil (nil)	1.1m (0.5m)	1.8p (1.45p)	0.8p (nil)
Parishman Partners (F)	30.78m (31.68m)	5.52m (6.42m)	35.3p (40.8p)	13.2p (12.2p)
Charles Taylor (F)	22.22m (20.03m)	3.38m (3.54m)	9.0p (10.2p)	4.8p (2.88p)
TDS Circuits (F)	15.75m (13.27m)	0.78m (0.74m)	2.43p (2.17p)	nil (nil)
Barney & Co (F)	18.81m (20.72m)	1.38m (1.16m)	8.2p (5.8p)	0.2p (5.8p)
UK Safety (F)	29.20m (30.20m)	-0.78m (0.85m)	-2.2p (1.3p)	nil
Waterman Partnership (F)	11.40m (8.9m)	0.72m (0.48m)	2.5p (1.7p)	1.3p (0.75p)

(F) - First (Q) - Interim

Granada surges ahead on a nerve-wracking day

MARKET REPORT



PETER THAL LARSEN

GERY Robinson must have had a jolly day on the golf course yesterday. While City trading screens lurched from red to blue and back to red again in one of the most nerve-wracking Fridays of recent years, shares in Granada, where the famously empty-diarried Mr Robinson is chairman, burst through the £10 barrier for the first time. They ended the day up 39p at 1035p.

Of course, it's just a few weeks since Mr Robinson was taking flack from institutional investors at Granada's annual general meeting. He and his fellow directors incurred the City's wrath after paying themselves for the inconvenience of reducing the length of their service contracts in the case of a takeover. After yesterday, however, Mr Robinson may once again find himself the subject of fund managers' affections.

Not that the rise in Grana-

da's share price had much to do with Mr Robinson's undoubted managerial skills. Rather, the television and hotels conglomerate basked in the news that US bidders are circling The Savoy Group, owners of the eponymous hotel on London's Strand, in which Granada has a 68 per cent stake.

Savoy's 'A' shares surged 255p to 1750p, valuing the group at £489m and Granada's share – a relic of the 1996 takeover of Forte which Mr Robinson is keen to sell – at a cool £333m. Analysts reckon the Wontner family, which controls Savoy through non-voting shares, could squeeze a bid of more than 1800p if an auction develops.

The bid action was overshadowed by a frantic quarter of an hour trading period in the morning in which market-makers shamelessly pushed and pulled at the FTSE 100 index in an attempt to secure the best possible outcome

for their positions in the derivatives market

The FTSE 100 March futures contract expired between 10:10 and 10:30 and in that time the market lurched to 5880.9, down 117 points on the day, before smashing through the 6,000 barrier and hitting 6,105.8 – a 225-point switch – exactly 14 minutes later.

The swing was so violent that the entire index was suspended as shares in gas distributor BG broke through the 20 per cent share price movement barrier.

Yesterday was the first time this ritual, which is played out to a lesser or greater extent on a quarterly basis, was conducted under the Stock Exchange's new order book. And while in the past marketmakers had to risk their capital if they wanted to move the index — and do so in full view of everyone in the market — the order book has removed

these constraints. Now, traders can move the index a long way by entering small trades for the entire index at inflated or deflated prices, and execute them all at once — moving the index a long way without putting up much capital. Even better, trades are anonymous so no one knows who's doing it.

Share Spotlight
share price, pence

Company	Share Price
Granada Group	1050

Month	Price Index (Approx.)
August 1991	880
September 1991	930
October 1991	880
November 1991	740
December 1991	880
January 1992	920
February 1992	940

After all the excitement the Footsie looked like it would stay above 6,000. A weak opening on Wall Street, however, dragged it down in the afternoon and it ended the day off 41.6 points at 5956.3.

Bid activity flared up again at the smaller end of the market. Vero, making boxes for mobile phone base stations, added 3.5p to 122.5p after the company revealed it had received an informal offer "at a level not significantly higher than the current market price". The company was floated at 220p just over two years ago.

AIM quoted Chemical Design, which has had an equally short and unpleasant stock market life, gained 31.5p to 125p after announcing it was in bid talks. The shares peaked at 255p early last year.

Pearson, the Financial Times to *Baywatch* group, came back to earth with a bump after Kleinwort Benson,

the broker which recommended the shares when they were below £8 at the beginning of February, moved its stance to "add" from "buy". Analyst Mike Hilton said that after a 30 per cent rise the shares were high enough as investors "await the major strategic restructuring of the group." The shares slipped 13.5p to 989.5p.

A "buy" recommendation from broker SBC Warburg helped food retailers Somerfield, up 33p at 331.5p, and Kwik Save, 36p better at 381.5p, as the two declared their merger unconditional.

The departure of Chris Oakley, the former Midlands Independent Newspapers chief executive, left Mirror Group down 9p at 196p.

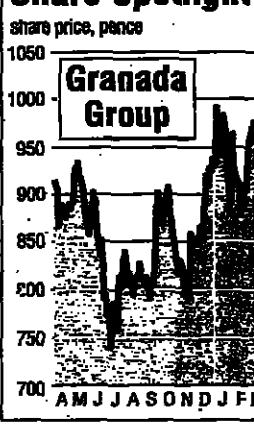
Engineering consultancy
WS Atkins hit a new peak of 529.5p, up 28.5p, as several directors cashed in share options. The shares have doubled in value since last June.

TAKING STOCK

PROTECTIVE clothing maker UK Safety crashed 2.75p to 4.75p after a management buyout vehicle, backed by venture capitalist, Alchemy, tabled a 2.5p cash offer. The bid, which was made at a 67 per cent discount to the prevailing market price values the company at just £1.01m. UK Safety, which is a major supplier of boots to the British Army, has had a rough time since floating at 50p in 1994. It currently only trades courtesy of a credit line from Bank of Scotland. Having failed to secure a better offer, the independent directors at unanimously recommending the offer.

AIM-QUOTED Computerland, providing computer services, firmed 5p to 235p after unveiling two acquisitions, to be funded by placing and open offer at 18p to raise £2.96m. Computerland, which floated last September at a share price of 100p, has been one of the junior market's best-performing shares this year.

Share Spotlight

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Jaunt in search of an elusive joint



A secret location:

Where our hungry hero, after a long and eventful hunt for banned beef on the bone, has to decide whether or not to consume it

WALTON'S *Crown Imperial* was playing on the taxi-driver's radio. It seemed suitably patriotic in a red-blooded English sort of way. At the door my unnamed host was waiting. He greeted me even before I could utter the password: "Hearts of Oak". He led me up a narrow staircase to an upper room full of solid antiques and gilded mirrors. At its centre was a long polished mahogany table, set with silver and tall-stemmed glasses. This was the place. I handed over my bottle of Gevrey-Chambertin in confirmation.

I had arrived in the lair of the secret beef-on-the-bone eaters. It had not been easy to track them down. I had begun at Butcher's Hall, the headquarters of the Backbone Party, which the City's leading catering firm, Chester Boyd, founded earlier this year to fight the regulations that now prevent it from serving the massive 70lb baron of beef which has been traditional there since AD975. "No, it's not us," said its managing director, Charles Boyd. "We're a pressure group, not a dining club." He offered me a Backbone badge, an executive stress-ball in the shape of a cow, and a copy of his new poster - "Should it be illegal to enjoy an occasional joint?" - which he hopes to place in the nation's butchers' shop-windows.

But, no, I wanted to meet those most stalwart of Englishmen, those who could stomach anything except authority. So I moved on. But the

Beef-on-the-Bone Science and Industry Forum proved no more productive. It turned out to be another respectable lobbying coalition to be launched next week under the aegis of Lord Willoughby de Broke, who led the peers' revolt in which the House of Lords demanded that the beef-on-the-bone be revoked. (To no avail: the Government ignored the vote). I moved on again, casting out messages in all directions. Then came the phone call I had been waiting for. A voice I did not recognise asked whether I wanted access to the hard-core meat. I did. A tryst was made. The time and the place, of course, were secret. (I nearly blew it on the night when I alighted from the taxi and asked two patrolling policemen for directions: they courteously offered to escort me, inquiring whether there was something interesting on there that night). I shook them off with faint excuses and ten minutes later was in the upper room where the table was laid for a group of dissidents who included a butcher, a chef, a QC, two solicitors, a scientist and a vet-beefeaters to a man.

There were opening pleasantries over the smoked haddock and Chablis but this was mere foreplay. Even before the plates from the first course were cleared the door opened and a four-boned wing-rib of beef - the prime part of the sirloin - was borne in by a liveried flunkie. The moment of truth had arrived. No one can accuse me of



Red in tooth and maw: The object of the author's search, holding centre stage during the illicit banquet

Photograph: John Voos

not being open-minded. By way of an *hors d'oeuvre* I had earlier been to the BSE inquiry where Dr Richard Lacey, the professor of clinical microbiology at Leeds University, and the Jeremiah of the beef industry, had been giving evidence. Lacey was the man who predicted doom and was ignored. Yet every measure he had demanded to combat the crisis had been implemented, though in each case, only years after he had recommended it. When I arrived he was in the middle of warning the inquiry that the Government was continuing its history of "fabrication", "suppression", and "serious omission" over BSE.

The true figures on new cases, he claimed, were probably much higher

than was being admitted. My forthcoming dinner was beginning to sound like a bad idea. I approached the wispy-haired professor during the coffee break for a more accurate risk assessment. "There can't be one," he said bluntly. "We just don't have the information." Lacey does not himself eat beef: "there are alternatives," he said, curtly. "But it is infinitely less dangerous now than it was before. The beef-on-the-bone ban came too late. It's pointless. There's far less risk now."

So what was his message to the clandestine diners? "Everyone has the right to poison themselves if they want to. If I was told I couldn't have the occasional cigar, I'd be annoyed."

I thought about him as the great joint of beef was set upon the table. "What is it?" asked the butcher. "Aberdeen Angus cross," said the chef. He began to carve succulent slices. The meat was delectably red to the bottom of the slice, not surrounded by a circle of browned meat, as it is with a boneless joint. "Off-the-bone joints are less juicy, less tender, more shrunken," he explained. "On the bone the heat comes from one side only. It improves the tenderness. With heat the fibres in the muscle contract and bunch. The bone keeps them stretched, which tenderises the meat." Before the ban only 5 per cent of beef was sold on the bone. "But it was the quality end of the

market," said the butcher. "Some 83 per cent of meat is sold from supermarkets, almost all off the bone. But with high-class butchers 15 to 20 per cent of our trade is on the bone. The demand comes from foodies, traditionalists and from ethnic groups. Koreans and Caribbeans, in my case."

The conversation turned to the law and whether or not the defence was likely to succeed in the case of Jim Sutherland, the Scottish hotelier who has become the first person prosecuted under the Beef Bones Regulations 1997. When he comes to court on 6 April he will argue, said a lawyer, that there were irregularities in the consultation process the Ministry of Agriculture

should have followed before bringing the regulations into force. "Quite right," said the butcher, "the National Federation of Meat and Food Traders received the regulations on a Friday afternoon and had to submit a response by the Monday."

The first plate of glistening pink beef was placed before me. Just before the dinner I had phoned Jim Sutherland in Scotland. I had been wary of these honey beekeepers. The stuff they had written in the right-wing newspapers was all wild libertarian stuff about blood sports, the Countryside March, Britain's noble history, the riots in Edinburgh after the 1725 tax upon malt and what we fought two world wars for.

But Sutherland was a measured chap who had the grace to acknowledge that the right to be able to choose to eat beef on the bone was relatively insignificant in the scale of human freedoms but none the less worth sticking out for. "If these regulations had been brought in when the scares were at their height I wouldn't have opposed them," he said. "But at the time they were introduced it seemed on the Government's own figures that the BSE epidemic was all but passed. In that circumstance there was no manifest danger. It all seems an unnecessary restriction on the liberty of the individual. If we all went through life assuming the worst, we'd never do anything," he added. "Government scientists admit, using a series of pessimistic assumptions, that there is about a 1 in 1.2 billion chance you'd contract CJD from beef on the bone. You've more chances of being hit by a meteorite. I think you'll be safe enough eating it." So I did.

I even ate the banana brûlée afterwards which, loaded with cream, presumably fell into the category of the 10,000 things which Jim Sutherland had warned me I did every day without thinking and yet which were actuarially more dangerous than eating beef.

But then - as the bones were discreetly taken away in a plastic carrier - I produced my cigar case and offered them round. There were no takers. "Genuine Habanos, hand-imported," I blustered. But I smoked alone. Now, evidently, I had gone too far.



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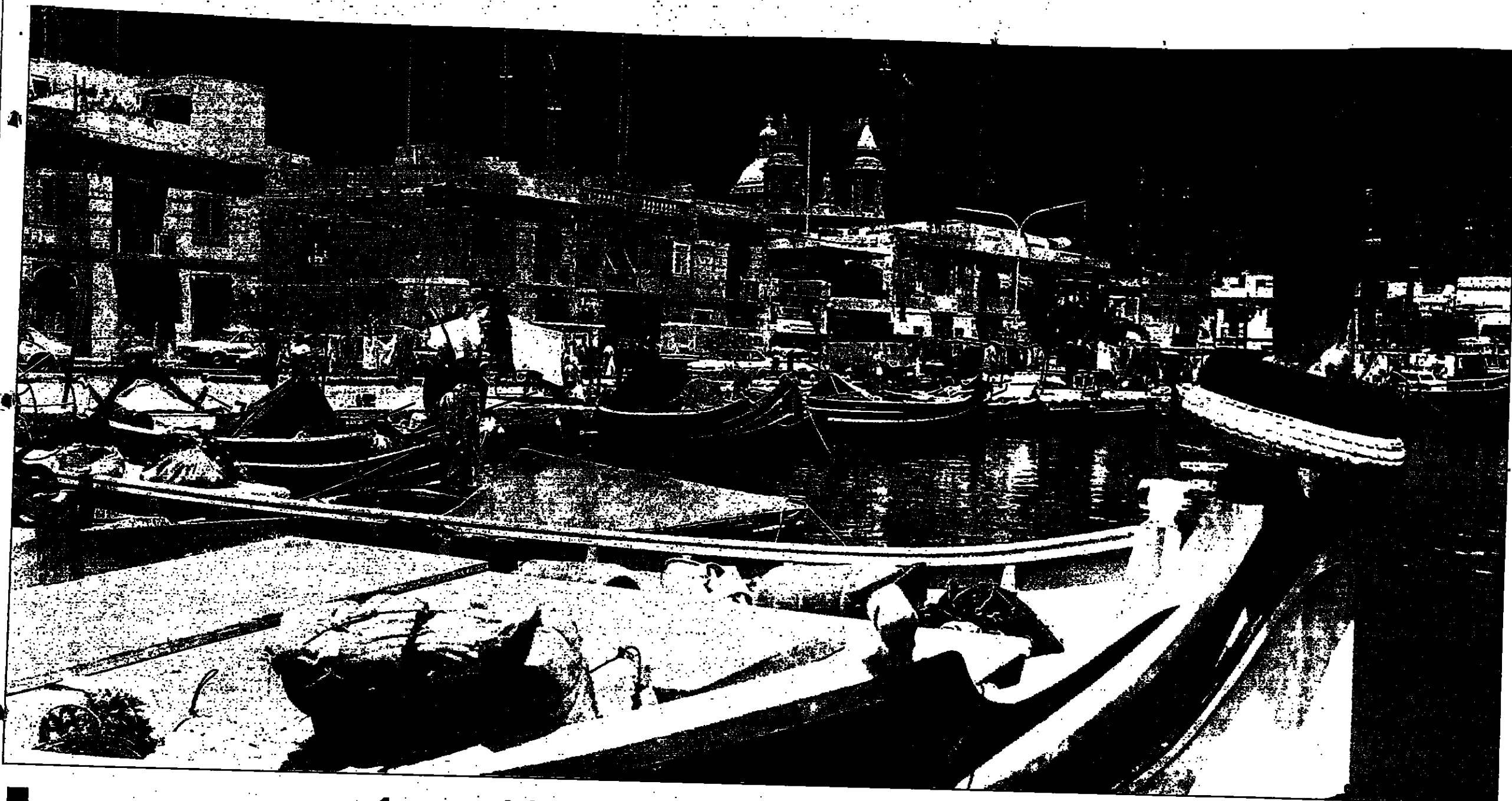
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TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 21 March 1998



Journey to the centre of the Med

In Malta you cross paths with many civilizations – and their relics. Cleo Paskal gets lost among the island's catacombs while failing to find a bowling alley

"Well, how about going to see some catacombs?" suggested my pal Gino. It was not the sort of lazy, late-afternoon activity I was used to – but this was Malta, a country so choked with history that it is easier to find an ancient, important grave site than, say, a bowling alley. And I didn't really feel like bowling, anyway.

"Sure."

We trundled along one of Malta's dusty back roads in Gino's Jeep. In the fading light I could see classic Maltese scenery: earth, shrubs, low limestone houses, all in various shades of yellowing brown. Beyond, constantly clutching at the beaches and cliffs, the dark blue sea. It was oddly timeless. And beautiful.

Gino suddenly pulled over to the side of the road. "We're here."

I looked around. Earth, shrubs, low limestone houses.

Gino got out and I followed him across a field, up a low ridge and through someone's back yard. Just beyond it, the side of a hill had been carved away, showing several openings into the rock face. Gino went into one of them.

It was starting to get dark. I began to wonder exactly how much I really knew about Gino, the Maltese cousin of a good friend from London. At his cousin's request, Gino had offered to be my guide. But, as far as I remembered, luring me into tombs at night hadn't been part of the deal.

"You coming?" he shouted, his voice echoing inside the hill. I went.

The opening was a low doorway. I stepped over

the threshold and down into the sunken chamber. I was in a hallway, with alcoves on either side. Some were too dark to see into, but the others were unquestionably designed to hold bodies.

There were waist-high slabs and central fire pits for visitors who wanted to spend a cold winter evening in the company of the dead departed. It was ancient and eerie but strangely welcoming – a reminder of a time when life and death weren't so far apart.

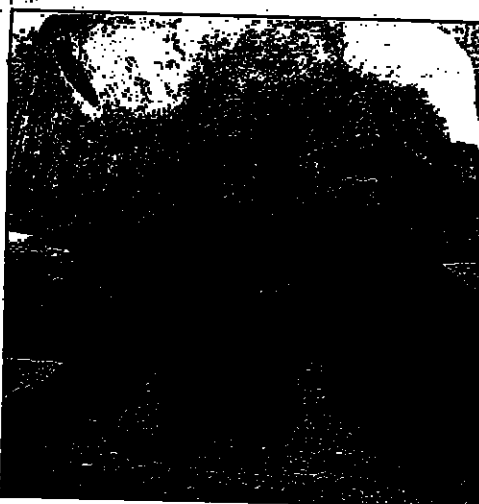
Gino pointed out details. From carvings on the walls, you could tell that the site had been used by Christians and Jews, together. Most of the catacomb was accessible, but some of the other openings into the rock face were barred.

Soon it was too dark to see any more, and we returned to the Jeep.

I was amazed. Given how interesting the site was, why was there no security? Why wasn't it mentioned in guidebooks? Why was there no information available on site? "Welcome to Malta," said Gino, by way of explanation.

Because of its strategic position, everybody who was anybody has controlled Malta. The Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Castilians, Knights of St John. French – and, yes, the British – have all left their mark, literally. You can't find a more condensed and varied collection of archaeological sites.

That leaves little room for modern Malta to manoeuvre. Every new house, road, factory and farm is potentially destroying something of unique historical importance. Along the way towards the fut-



ure, bits of the past are sacrificed. This catacomb, an eddy in the current of time, isn't important enough to save.

So what are the Maltese saving? Well, unlike Gino, many of the Maltese who grew up playing hide-and-seek on World Heritage sites don't realise their unique inheritance. And those who do realise it wonder why their nation of 350,000 should have to shoulder alone the financial burden of maintaining sites of world importance.

As a result, in spite of some devoted Maltese and an increasing number of supportive foreigners, the archaeological sites of Malta are in a precarious state. One of the most famous, the Hal Saffien Hypogeum, an enormous underground burial complex carved out of the rock, has already been closed to the public after tragic damage caused by decades of mismanagement.

But there are still more than enough mind-blowing open sites to lure you away from the beaches. After my outing with Gino, I went out of my way to visit as many as possible. Their accessibility and

range became addictive, and soon my day in Malta wasn't complete unless I had seen a temple, a catacomb, or a beautiful piece of prehistoric architecture.

The most impressive for me was Ggantija Temples, on Gozo. From the car park, I walked through farm fields along a dirt track until suddenly, on a slight rise to the right, there they were. Two enormous Neolithic twin temples, 1,000 years older than the pyramids at Giza. Constructed from massive blocks of limestone, some weighing more than 50 tons, they made Stonehenge look like a random collection of pebbles.

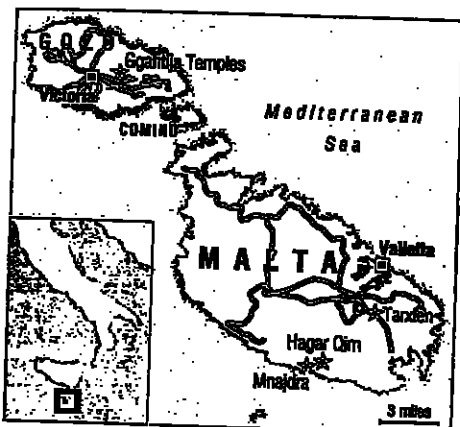
The temple roofs were gone, allowing a clear view of the floor plan. Designed to honour a voluptuous fertility goddess with wide hips and large bosom, they looked, from above, roughly like a drawing of two snowmen side by side, the bottom circle representing the hips, the middle circle the breasts, and the top one the head.

As with all Maltese sites, you could walk right into the temples. I let my imagination run riot, smelling the scorched flesh while looking at the burnt stones in the animal sacrifice area, listening for the whispers of guidance at the oracle hole, pretending to pour liquid offerings (I chose water rather than blood) into the libation holes.

Other temples offered different imaginary fodder. Tardien Temples, on Malta itself, have astounding carvings. Mnajdra Temples, also on Malta, feature solar alignment, making a huge prehistoric calendar. Hagar-Qim's towering reconstructed facade makes you feel the weight of belief.

Hopefully, as more tourists tear themselves away from the bikinis on the beaches to see the voluptuous goddesses of the temples, the Maltese Government will find the momentum and the money to make the country's past part of its future. And with any luck, the next time I see Gino, we will still be able to creep around the catacombs rather than go bowling.

All aboard: Malta's living fishing heritage, above; and prehistoric remains at Tardien temple, left. Photograph: Britstock-IFA/Habel and Robert Harding Picture Library



Making for Malta
Cleo Paskal travelled to Malta using some spare Air Miles.
For fare-paying passengers, Air Malta (0181-785 3177) flies from several UK airports to Malta. Fares from Gatwick and Heathrow for the summer start at £189 including tax; departures from Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow are slightly more expensive. You may find lower fares through an Air Malta subsidiary, Malta Direct Travel (0181-785 3233).
GB Airways, an affiliate of British Airways (0345 222111), operates daily from Gatwick. The Malta Tourist Office is at 36-38 Piccadilly, London W1V 0PP (0171-292 4900).

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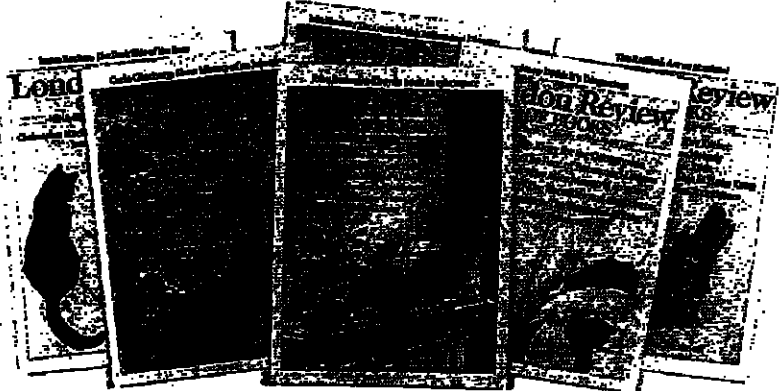
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London Review OF BOOKS
ENGAGING THE MIND





SIMON CALDER

If you were planning to travel to France yesterday, you may have found out the hard way that duty-free sales within the European Union are due to end in July 1999. French ferry workers blockaded Calais and the entrance to the Channel Tunnel in protest at the EU proposal, saying their jobs are threatened.

They are, no doubt, partly correct. Some ferry services across the Channel will probably end when Brussels closes the loophole next summer. And, in the full knowledge that this will inflame the powerful pro-duty free lobby, I wholeheartedly applauded the EU's move.

I say this as a European citizen who has happily smoked and drunk for most of his adult life, but finds the crazy economics of cross-Channel links indefensible.

On a Eurostar train from Kent to Calais, as with any intra-EU rail service, there is no opportunity to buy duty-free goods. Yet on Le Shuttle, the car-carrying service through the Channel Tunnel, I am encouraged to buy alcohol and tobacco at well below the usual price. In a single market, this is as ridiculous as being able to avoid duty on a journey between Coventry and Cardiff.

The position on the ferries is even more absurd. Earlier this year, the culmination of irrational pricing was reached when Hoverspeed began paying motorists and their passengers to travel between Dover and Calais. The company could drive a high-speed ferry through the economics of transport purely because it sells booze and fags at such high profit margins.

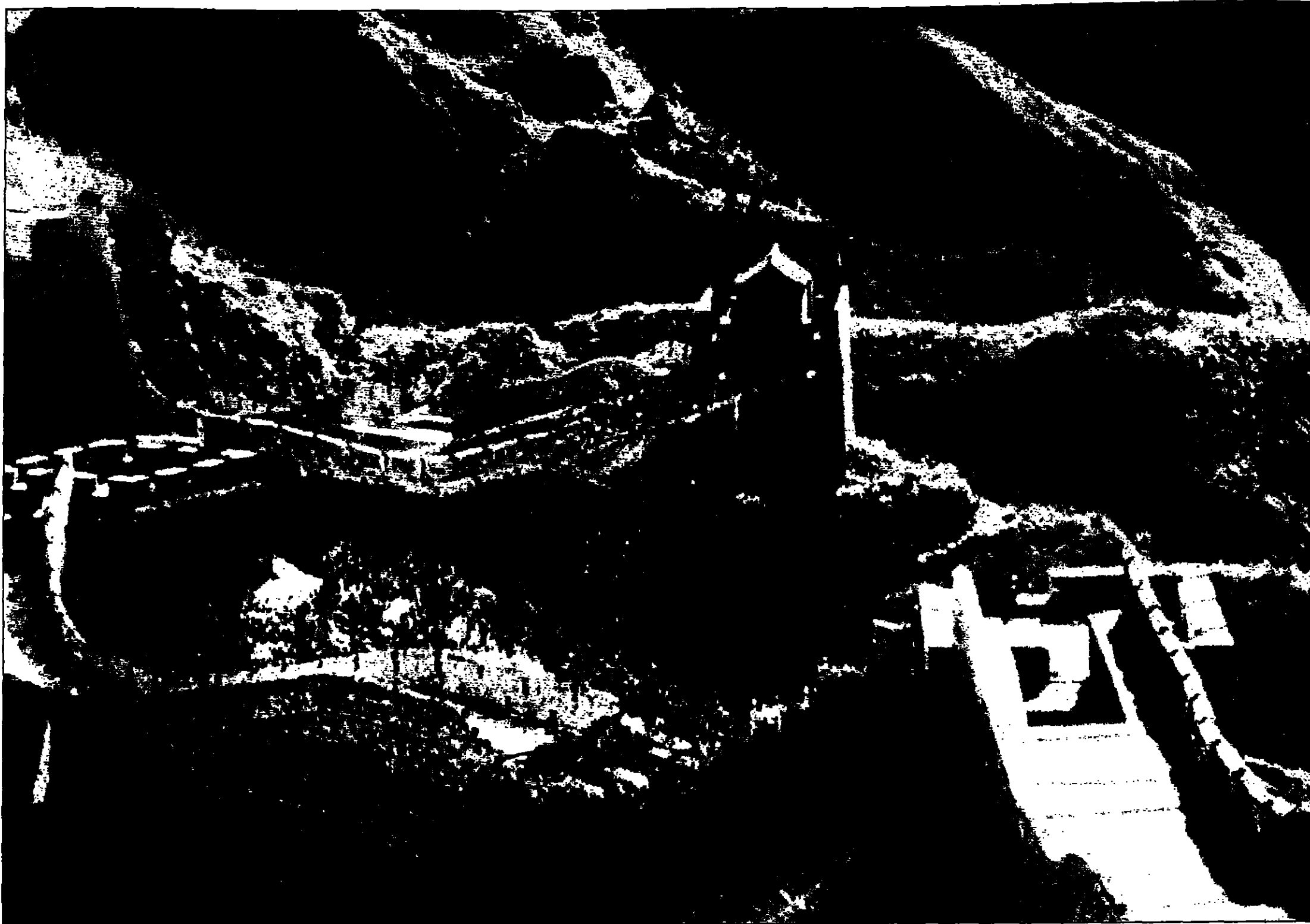
People spend so much on alcohol and tobacco that the shipping companies can make more from duty-free sales than from ticket revenues. It is worthwhile burning expensive fuel for the benefit of those who have no interest in France beyond the nearest hypermarket.

So who is paying for this? The ferry companies, and their allies in the Duty-Free Confederation such as the airlines, airports and tobacco companies, like to portray duty-free sales as a victimless perk. In reality, of course, you and I are bearing the cost. The value that the Treasury would otherwise earn from the drink and cigarettes is effectively being transferred to the shopper, who then splits the profits with the operator.

The duty-free lobby says that this is a flawed argument: many of the sales would simply not take place if duty-frees were abolished. But in the case of tobacco, this is surely a good thing? The high tax on cigarettes is explained by its deterrent value, and the need to contribute to the costs of health care for smokers.

I defend the rights of the smoker, but equally society has a right to expect the smoker to bear the consequences of his or her actions. The duty-free lobby would have us believe that they are doing the world a favour by selling a dangerous drug cheaply. If ending duty-free sales helps save the life of just one person who would otherwise die from a smoking-related illness, that alone surely justifies the action.

For the next 15 months, the hot air emitted by the Duty-Free Confederation will be matched only by the fumes pouring from ferries full of booze-cruisers. From 1 July next year, though, I hope shipping companies will get back to their real business, the safe carriage of people and cargo.



Mother and child revolution

Family travels: often there's a Great Wall between parents and their offspring. But Louise Jury and her mother enjoyed a cultural reunion on a trip to China.

You learn a lot about other people and their families when you announce you're going on holiday with your mum. Some friends express amazement that you could contemplate such a thing, as if the prospect of travel *en famille* appeals them.

Others appear impressed by such signs of parental pluckiness. All that worried my mum was whether I could conceivably have a good time with her. "Are you sure?" she asked repeatedly. "Of course," I said - and we did.

The choice of trip was essential. We wanted it to be somewhere completely different from Britain, a hot-

iday of a lifetime for someone who has had few opportunities to travel. But there were factors to bear in mind. We wanted to avoid places too hot, as my mum is a fair-skinned redhead and inclined to keel over in the sun. We preferred somewhere with ancient ruins and grand sights to keep us busy, rather than beaches and bars alone.

Although my mother is quite young, I contemplated some of the less comfortable journeys in my travel history and decided that some of them might not be appropriate in this particular case: overnight public bus trips half-way across Turkey, with the inevitable dodgy tummy and a bus driver inclined to let his hands wander all over you if you misguidedly sit behind him; a tiring journey to Auschwitz in a train with a failed heating system, one particularly freezing April.

My mum deserved a more conventionally enjoyable time than that, I thought. Missing a train and having to kip down in a station may be fine for the hardy traveller, but it was not the kind of ordeal I thought she should have to endure. And I wanted it to be something extra special for her, a holiday to enjoy and to remember.

Glancing through a selection of the brochures, I quickly ruled out some of the dodgy options. Egypt was slightly risky in the wake of Luxor and I've been there. And Lanka with temperatures barely dipping under 80 degrees was out. The people of Australia speak English (sort of) and most look much too Western. After a lot of thought and deliberation, we made up our minds. We plumped for China.

Although it is slowly opening up to the West, many seasoned adventurers of my acquaintance have not explored that far. Those who have been there spoke of the nightmares of Chinese bureaucracy for independent travellers. All things considered, joining an organised party seemed a good bet.

We were immediately welcomed into the arms of a group of people mostly in their 50s and 60s, with the odd honeymoon couple and widowed 71-year-old thrown in. Although most of them were couples, our mother and daughter combination fitted in perfectly.

And, as I anticipated, my mum and I got on just fine. The only conversation even approaching a dispute will be familiar to anyone who also has completely selfless and overly-re-



Good relations: China's umbilical, the Great Wall (top); Louise Jury and her mother on the wall (above)
Photograph (top): Xianhua

sonable parents. "What would you like to do?" I'd ask. "Oh, I don't mind, whatever you would like to do," Mum replies. "Well, we could do X,

Y or Z." "Whatever you think, I'll fit in with you. It's all new to me," she says, wanting to be 100 per cent agreeable and totally reasonable. Just occasionally, I fancied banging my head against the wall under the pressure of the decision-making - and her wonderful niceness.

Yet, of course, as most of our schedule was packed with visiting Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall and the rest of China's innumerable treasures, this slight note of disharmony mattered not at all as we spent our time reveling in the sights of the China experience.

The itinerary often started with leaving the hotel at 8.30am and not returning before 9.30pm or 10pm, just the kind of schedule we wanted in a country we might never return to.

So my mum and I puffed our way to a high point on the Great Wall, where she took in the view, and I decided to trek a little further to where the restoration runs out and the wall begins to crumble. We bartered for matching "I've Been To The Great Wall of China" T-shirts, hers in English, mine, for the hell of it, in Chinese.

In Shanghai, she looked alarmed as I clambered on to this high harbour

wall to take a picture of the front. At the sight of the Terracotta Warriors at Xian we both gazed in stunned amazement at the massed ranks of life-size clay soldiers. In Suzhou, a beautiful town of gardens and canals, we collapsed in hysterical giggles as two elderly Chinese women tried to sell us hideous live and wriggling shrimp-like things. Back in Beijing, we caught a cab downtown together for a well-deserved, and enjoyable, night out with the locals.

My mum says she would never have thought of going to China on her own, so was thrilled when I suggested we go. It was even better that I took all the hassle of making the arrangements out of her hands (not as selfless as it seems as I have done far more travelling than she has): "It was great, because you looked after me and did everything," she says.

Which, I'm afraid to say, is a very easy thing to do when your mum's as lovely as mine is.

Louise Jury and her mother paid £1,495 each through Travelsphere Holidays (01858 410456) for two weeks in China. The price included transport, accommodation (mainly four-star hotels), meals and guided tours, and a visit to the Peking Opera.

RED CHANNEL

Surcharges in Slovakia

"The system of charging for baggage on Slovakian public transport appears to be a nationwide obsession; we were even charged a small baggage fee on our Euroline bus home although we had return tickets, including free baggage transport."

"We were caught out on Bratislava's trams going to the bus station. Having virtuously purchased and stamped our own tickets, we were dismayed when an inspector demanded two tickets for our packs."

"Because we were suspicious about the fine, he

took us to the main vending kiosk outside the station, where there was a tiny chart indicating a charge of 3 krona [about 5 pence] for each large bag. With our passports confiscated, we had to go to the police station, where they demanded a whopping 1,400 krona fine [over £25].

"Eventually we beat them down to half that amount, but it still hit us hard in the pocket and was an unpleasant experience."

Letter from Sarah O'Mahony and Daniel Suckey, in *Planet Talk*, the free newsletter from Lonely Planet (0171-428 4300).

GREEN CHANNEL:

As Science Week draws to a close, you may have come to realise that science is much more than Bunsen burners and test tubes. Perhaps inevitably, it has even become incorporated into holidays.

Several organisations organise working holidays with a large scientific and conservation component. The Earthwatch Institute is one of the largest funders of scientific field research in the world. But as well as having real scientists working on its projects around the world, ordinary non-scientists with just a healthy supply of money,

curiosity and willingness to work can take part in their scientific trips.

Join an Earthwatch team (which costs between £400 and £2,000 for an average two-week expedition), and you can choose from projects world-wide, such as working with an Indonesian scientist to introduce solar technology to villages in Lombok island, East Bali.

Coral Cay Conservation is another organisation for the casual amateur scientist, who can also bask in the waters of beautiful coral atolls. CCC volunteers pay between £650 for two weeks

and £2,550 for two months. Work involves scuba-diving to conduct survey work on the reefs of Turneffe Atoll, in Belize, for instance - carefully guided by marine scientists. All information will be used to establish a management plan for the atoll, with the aim of protecting its precious marine life. There are also projects in the Philippines and Borneo.

For an "alternative" scientific holiday, why not Wwoof? Working Weekends on Organic Farms, or Wwoofing, is an increasingly popular cheap way of

travelling and learning about all things organic. In exchange for providing labour, Wwoofers get first-hand experience of organic techniques, healthy meals, and a place to lay their sleeping-bags. You can Wwoof for a weekend or for several months, in the UK and about 50 other countries. Wwoofing is also proof that a science holiday does not have to empty your wallet. A subscription payment of £10 for one or two people travelling together lets you work anywhere in Britain and southern Europe, and allows

you access to information about Wwoofing worldwide.

Earthwatch Institute, 57 Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6JH (01865 311600) <http://www.earthwatch.org> E-mail: info@earthwatch.org

Coral Cay Conservation, 154 Clapham Park Road, London SW4 7DE (0171 498 6248), www.coralcay.org E-mail: ccc@coralcay.demon.co.uk

Wwoof, PO Box 2675, Lewes, BN7 1RB (01273 476286).

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مسكن من الامال

48 hours on the Seine

Get to the heart of Paris in the spring by exploring its main artery. Natasha Edwards offers a riverbound guide to the city

Why go now?

The Seine is the lifeblood of Paris: it is not simply its historic heart, where the first settlement was founded 2,000 years ago; it is also the focus of a new Paris, with the fast-being-built areas of Bercy and at the new Bibliothèque Nationale in the east. Besides, as the song says, "I love Paris in the springtime..."

Beam down

Eurostar (0345 303030) from London Waterloo and Ashford to Gare du Nord costs £69 return if you go midweek and stay away a Saturday night; £89 if you leave on a Friday. For these fares you need to book three days in advance. An unrestricted ticket costs £179.

For specimen fares on some of the many air routes from the UK to Paris, the following airlines were called and asked for quotes departing the UK on 3 April and returning 6 April: Air France (0181-742 6600) from Birmingham £169.40; British Midland (0345 554554) or British Airways (0345 222111) from Heathrow £112.50; BA from Manchester £123.50.

Get your bearings

You should have no problem finding your way here. The Seine runs through the centre of Paris, dividing the city both physically and psychologically between Rive Gauche (Left Bank) and Rive Droite (Right Bank), with the Ile de la Cité and Ile-St-Louis swimming in the middle. Numerous bridges link the two banks, and though some sections resemble an autoroute, cobbled verges mean that you can walk beside the river in much of central Paris.

For aerial views, Métro line 6 crosses the Seine above ground both west (Pont Bir-Hakeim) and east (Pont de Bercy), while line 5 crosses the Seine at Gare d'Austerlitz, or head for the riverside department store La Samaritaine, which has an open-air viewing terrace on the 11th floor.

Check in

Among the antique shops of quai Voltaire is the old-fashioned Hôtel du Quai Voltaire (00 33 1 42 61 50 91) at No 19, where Oscar Wilde, Sibelius and Picasso stayed. A double room, 690FF, could be noisy; soundproofing is to come next year.

One hotel where you certainly won't see the Seine, but you will be right in the centre of it, is the Hôtel du Jeu de Paume (00 33 1 43 26 14 18) at 54 rue St-Louis-l'Île, the main street of the aristocratic Ile St-Louis. The hotel was originally a jeu de paume or real tennis court, built in the 1630s, and was brilliantly converted a decade ago. The beamed court is now a dramatic, galleried breakfast room, while the bedrooms offer plenty of creature comforts.

Double room 1,230FF-1,385FF

Not quite on the Seine, but great for those on student budgets, the MJE hostel Le Fourcy (00 33 1 42 74 23 45) at 6 rue de Fourcy in the Marais offers pleasant hostel accommodation in a lovely 17th-century hôtel particulier (from 125FF for a bed in a dormitory to 198FF for a single room).

Take a ride

... on a Bateau Mouche (00 33 1 40 76 99 99), the largest of the tour boats that chug up and down the Seine. A one-hour trip will show you most of the city's main sights. Take in the Eiffel Tower across the river as you board at Pont de l'Alma.

Boats head off downstream past the Trocadéro and the circular Maison de la Radio on the Right Bank. Catch a glimpse of Passy - this now rather snooty part of Paris was still a rustic village when Balzac lived here in the 19th century; it was originally a spa noted for the curative powers of its springs. Many Parisians perversely preferred the dubious delights of drinking the water of the Seine (one theory to explain this being a confusion between the words Seine and saïne - meaning healthy).

As the boat passes the narrow Allée des Cygnes island, look out for the Statue of Liberty (reduced size) sticking up at the end, a reminder that she was sculpted by a Frenchman - Auguste Bartholdi - as a gift to New York.

The boat turns round here and heads upstream to take in several of the city's greatest sights: the Eiffel Tower, the ornate Pont Alexandre III, the

such as steak and chips or rabbit in mustard.

Cultural afternoon

With the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Institut du Monde Arabe and Palais de Chaillot all en

here on their way to the guillotine, among them Marie-Antoinette, Danton and Robespierre. In the Chapelle des Girondins are Marie-Antoinette's crucifix and a guillotine blade. The reconstructed cells

An aperitif

Take your apero on a boat while heading upstream for a slice of new Paris, where a little nucleus of floating music bars has moored on quai de la Gare in front of the vast Bibliothèque Nationale François Mitterrand, the new national library. Much the most romantic, and the most incongruous, is the Guinguette Pirate, a three-masted Chinese junk that sailed over to Paris from the Far East a few years ago. There's live music on deck most evenings.

Demure dinner

Make for St-Germain-des-Près and the extremely successful Les Bookinistes (00 33 1 43 25 45 94) at 53 quai des Grands-Augustins, the best of five moderately priced offshoots run by superchef Guy Savoy. The dining-room is chic and contemporary - amber walls, wacky modern mirror frames - and the modern French cooking is original and stylishly presented.

Sunday mornings go to church Notre Dame on Ile de la Cité is, of course, one of the most visited sights in France, but two of Paris's finest medieval churches are also nearby, in the Latin Quarter.

The little church of St-Julien-le-Pauvre overlooks the Seine and Notre Dame from a small garden. The outside is rather dilapidated, but the interior still has its richly decorated late-12th-century capitals among the icons - it is now used by the Greek Melchite community. St-Séverin is a late-Gothic gem, famed for its double ambulatory and unique double-spiral column.

Bracing brunch

Back on board for a leisurely brunch on La Calife (00 33 1 43 54 50 04). Brunch is still viewed

golden dome of Les Invalides and the Musée d'Orsay on the Left Bank; the Grand Palais, Tuileries gardens and Louvre on the Right.

Lunch on the run

Stop off at Le Rallye (01 43 54 29 65), a rough-and-tumble riverside café-tabac at 11 quai de la Tournelle, with an authentic Fifties mirror and a plastic interior crammed with Timin memorabilia. There's nothing fancy here, but it is a true local in the heart of Paris. Sit in the smoky inside, or outside at a pavement table, for an inexpensive beer or glass of wine, sandwiches or a hot plat du jour

give a pretty good idea of what lingering here involved, but money clearly helped; the poor slept on straw crowded in communal cells, while the well-off could pay for a private cell and such luxuries as a desk and bed.

Shop in a box

For quintessential riverside shopping go to the bouquinistes - the second-hand book, print and postcard dealers identified by their bottle-green boxes attached to the parapets of the quays. They stretch along both sides of the Seine in central Paris, perfect for buying a série noire crime novel or that old Byrrh advertisement.

HIGH ROAD

Soar away to the sauropods. Next Friday, the world's largest dinosaur exhibition opens at the Philadelphia Civic Center. Quest Worldwide (0181-546 6000) is offering a fare from London, Birmingham or Manchester for £197. Admission to the exhibition is an extra \$15 (£9).

LOW ROAD

Alternatively, make do with *Dinosaurs: the Next Generation* at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds (0990 106666). Admission to the special event and the permanent attractions costs £6.95 for adults and £3.25 for under 15s.

CHECK OUT

A plane

Central America opens up next weekend, when British Airways launches a new scheduled route from Gatwick to Cancun. Mexico's biggest Caribbean resort will provide a gateway for easy access to the Yucatán Peninsula, Belize, Guatemala and elsewhere in Central America. The lead-in fare direct from the airline (0345 222111) on the first flight out is an Apex ticket at £648 (inc tax), but lower fares are available through discount agents. Next weekend's Time Off will feature a report on Cancun itself.

A train

You could be travelling to or from Inverness for next to nothing, providing you are old enough. Great (or should that be Grey?) North Eastern Railway is offering the over-fifties vastly reduced fares on the line from London King's Cross through York to Newcastle and Scotland. The return journey from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow or Inverness to London costs £19; call 0345 225225 for bookings.

The trick, besides being born before March 1948, is to choose your dates with care; GNER insists you travel on Tuesdays or Wednesdays only.

A boat

The only way to reach Tristan da Cunha, a speck of British territory in the south Atlantic west of South Africa, is to sail aboard RMS *St Helena*, which makes an annual visit to the island. It is not cheap: flying out to Cape Town, then spending a fortnight at sea with no absolute guarantee of being able to land on Tristan da Cunha, costs at least £2,600. Book through Cunow Shipping in Falmouth (01326 211466). If this sounds too demanding in terms of time and money, you can read more about the island in Harry Ritchie's book *The Last Pink Bit*, now out in paperback (Picador, £5.99).

A room

New Experience Holidays (01922 410909), which organises walking trips in Europe, does not mince words when describing the hotels it uses in the Moselle village of Alf. At the Hotel Junk, for example, you are told, the proprietor, Frau Johanna Junk, is also the local butcher: "Definitely NOT the place for vegetarians". Sadly, New Experience no longer offers a discount for customers called Alf.

A meal

Harry Ramsden's is rapidly becoming a multinational chain of fish and chip shops. But the original version at White Cross, nine miles north west of Leeds, remains a tourist attraction. To keep the interest value, the restaurant is staging a series of special events. On Monday (23 March), you can enjoy "Opera and Chips" for an all-inclusive £16.50. Book on 01943 874641.

A drink

Lamberhurst Vineyard is one of the *en-route* attractions in a booklet called "Country Tours", published this week by Kent Tourism. The vineyard, near Tunbridge Wells, offers wine-tasting every day except Christmas. The bibulous theme continues with the Whitbread Hop Farm, the largest group of Victorian oasthouses in the world. Another feature of the publication is a list of more than 40 pubs belonging to the Shepherd Neame brewery. You may be surprised to learn, then, that the subtitle of the booklet (price £1, from Kent Tourism, 01622 696165) is "Circular Driving Routes in the Kent Countryside".

A week from now

... Drayton Manor Park, near Tamworth in Staffordshire, opens for the summer. Shockwave, Europe's only stand-up roller-coaster, remains the main attraction. Admission to the site costs £3 for adults, £2 for under-14s; a wrist band entitling you to unlimited rides all day costs £10 for adults and £7.50 for children up to 13 years. Call 01827 287979.

A month from now

... you could be riding across the Greenlandic wilderness, hauled by a team of huskies. Through Arctic Experience (01737 218800), £1,160 buys you flights via Reykjavik, five nights' accommodation, and transport in a sled driven by a professional.

A year from now

... you may experience better weather in Barbados than England's cricketers got this week. Unifit (0990 114114) offers a fortnight at the Sugar Cane Club for £699, including flights from Gatwick or Manchester. Note that the average annual precipitation in Manchester is 35in; in Barbados, rainfall is half as much again.

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HIGH ROAD
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On your marks in Munich

As the pound hits its highest level against the German currency for nine years, Muthena Paul Alkazraji sees Bavaria's capital from his bike

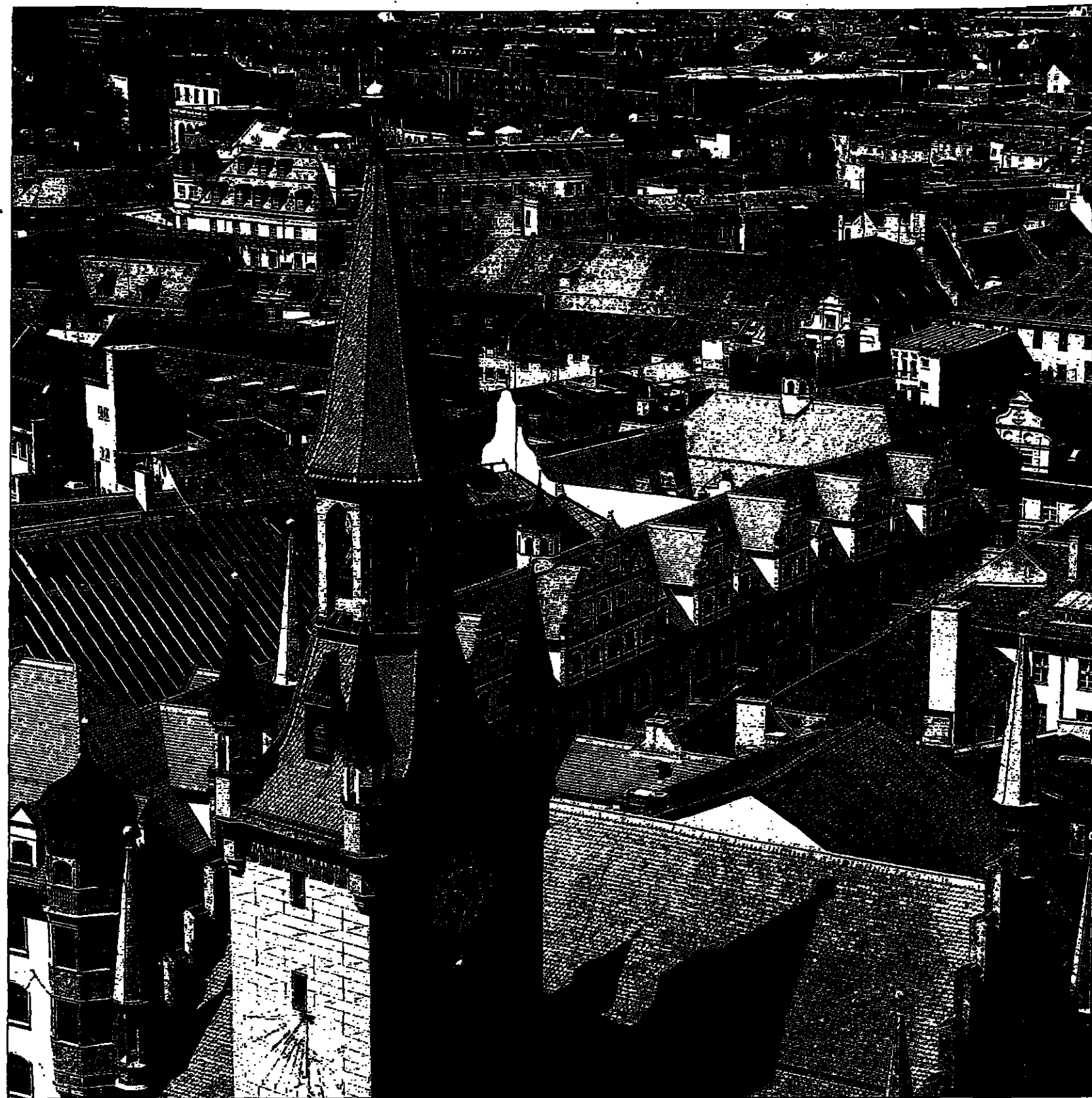
What would be Germany's contribution to the global supply of "world cities" for the 21st century? Berlin, certainly; Hamburg, probably; and, to complete the Teutonic triumvirate, only Bavaria's capital can suffice. Munich's size and stature provides the touristic gravity to attract visitors, but also presents them with a bit of a problem. How best to get around a city so vast that it already possessed three orbital *Autobahnen* while the M25 was still on the drawing-board?

The 1,300km of Munich's cycle paths provide a solution, not least because they are so neatly marked and organised. If a cyclist's traffic light says "Halt", Munichers will obediently wait at a desolate pedestrian intersection until the light changes to green. An English friend living here has tried sneaking across, and been promptly ticked off by affronted citizens. Given a modest stretch of smooth Tarmac, however, and the temptation – especially among the 100,000 students at Germany's largest university – to crank up the pedal-power is frequently surrendered to with unerring abandon. That said, Munich's wealth of historic buildings and elegant avenues, extensive gardens and gradient-free terrain make it excellent for urban cycling.

I began my trip away from the weaving lines of cyclists in the centre of Germany's "secret capital", by the Deutsches Museum on Ludwig's Bridge. My chosen route was through leafy parkland on the east bank of the river Isar, across Luitpold Bridge, right into the English Garden, and then north to the park's Kleinhesseloher See.

At the start, the wooded pathways through Maximilian's Garden, across from the Deutsches Museum, give continuous, bank-edge views of the beautiful river Isar. It flows from its Alpine source 50km south of the city, through the heart of Munich, before spilling into the Danube near Deggendorf. Clean, gurgling and green, it runs swift and shallow around white pebble banks and islets on which flocks of black-headed gulls gather.

With a clear blue sky, and the *Föhn* wind blowing in from the Alps and warming the city up, I freewheeled along the bank, under Maximilian's Bridge by the seat of the Bavarian State Parliament, and on to Friedens Angel. This golden statue of a Greek goddess, perched on a high column overlooking the river, was built in 1871 by King Ludwig II. Now known as the "fairy-tale king", on account of his love of building romantic castles in line with Wagnerian



Bavarian beauty: view over Munich, Germany's secret capital
Photograph: Gavin Heller/Robert Harding Picture Library

Cyclists whip across distant gaps in the chestnut trees; the green, onion-shaped domes on the towers of the Frauenkirche top the city's skyline.

From the Monopteros, I pedalled past the park's Chinese Tower, and northwards towards the Seehaus beergarten on the edge of the Kleinhesseloher See. This large, man-made lake is only a stone's throw from Schwabing, home of the city's once thriving artists' quarter (Kandinsky, Klee, Brecht). The beergarten made a suitable finishing-point for my trip and as I sat back to relax, water lapped at the edges of the wooden benches and tables arranged in ordered ranks under the swaying trees. Without a sandwich in my saddlebag, I considered sampling the Munich fare, but the thought of *Schweinshaxe'n* (pork knuckles) quelled the idea. It was tempting to try the macho Bavarian challenge of drinking a "mass" of beer. I settled, however, for half a litre, which, in a robust glass mug, seemed heavy enough, although it falls pathetically short of a local record: one muscular Munich beer-maiden carrying 27 litre glasses at once.

Such boisterous images, though, were a far cry from my gently satisfying day – a little biking, a little beer, in a leafy city of great architectural elegance.

Gateway to Bavaria

Getting there: the best deal to Munich at present is on Debonair (0500 146200) from Luton to Munich for £117.40 return. Lufthansa (0145 737747) and British Airways (0345 222111) fly from Birmingham and Heathrow; BA also flies from Edinburgh and Gatwick, and Lufthansa from Manchester.

A more esoteric way to travel is by train, most economically achieved by using Eurostar (0345 303030) via Brussels to Cologne for £89, then one of the special evening or weekend deals promoted by German Rail (0181-390 8833) – which can get you across Germany to Munich for as little as £12 return for two people travelling together.

Getting around: in Munich a selection of cycles can be hired at Radis Touristik, near platform 31 of the Hauptbahnhof. Munich's main railway station. Prices begin at £25 per day. Further information: the German National Tourist Office is at 65 Curzon Street, London W1 (0171-493 0080).

German legend, he did not live happily ever after. Ludwig apparently neglected state affairs, was declared insane, and met a mysterious watery death in Lake Starnberg. The view from the monument's base stretches along Prinzregenten Strasse, past the Bavarian National Museum and the Haus der Kunst (House of German Art);

the route I had decided to take next. A short spin across Luitpold Bridge brought me alongside the building that Hitler's opponents nicknamed "Weisswurst" (a white sausage). This long, flat, neoclassical gallery is truly monolithic, opened in 1937 by Joseph Goebbels to house the Third Reich's notion of German

art (meanwhile, at the nearby Hofgarten, "degenerate art" was being displayed). It is now home to the State Gallery of Modern Art.

From the Haus der Kunst northwards, the English Garden stretches for five kilometres of open grassy spaces and woodland clumps, interwoven with smooth gravel

tracks. Known as Munich's "green lung", it was laid out in 1879.

As the gravel crunched underwheel, I took a path heading roughly in the direction of the Monopteros, a circular, Greek-style temple on a hilltop, which draws the eye from the southern end of the park. The view from the temple today is absorbing.

Just lie back and cycle into heaven

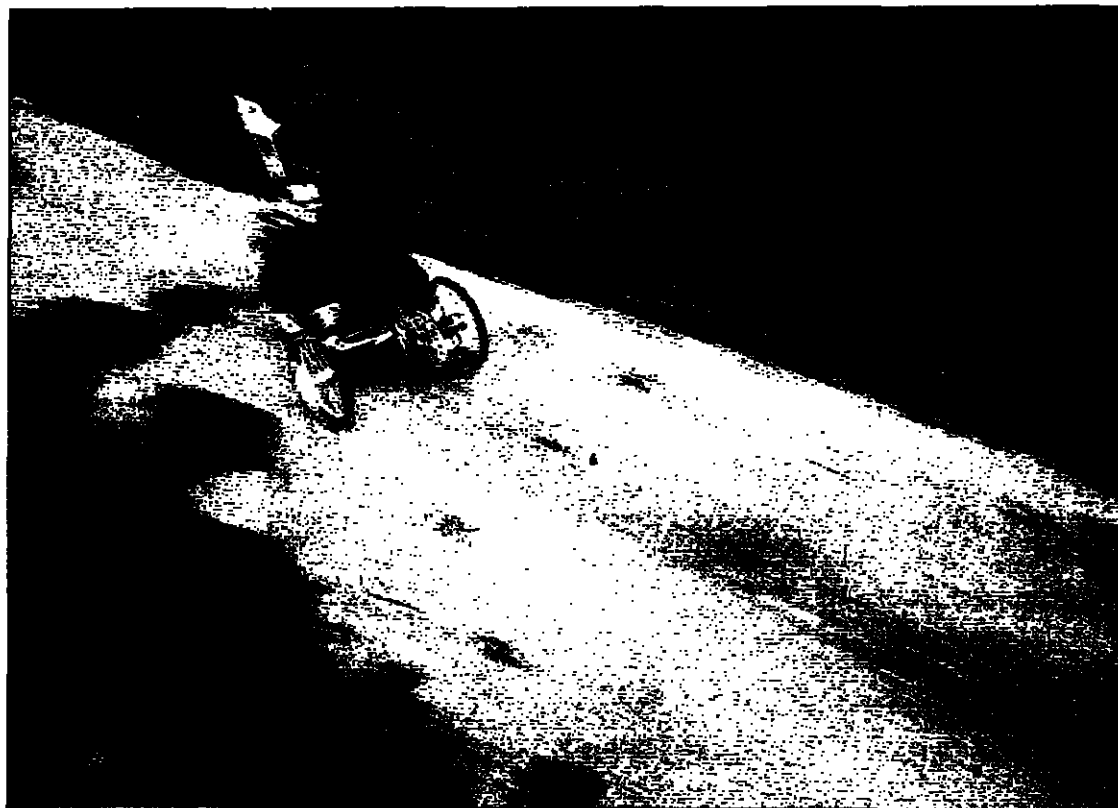
There's a lot wrong with most bikes: the saddle, for a start. Then there's the unorthopaedic bend you have to put into your back to reach the handlebars. And, above all else, when it comes to efficiency even a lightweight racing machine has the aerodynamics of a double-decker bus once you get on board.

Which is why recumbent riders are so laid-back they're almost horizontal. It's not just a question of attitude. You really do lie back, though you're not in fact much lower than you are on a normal bike. Gone is that sick joke of a saddle, and, even more important, out on the roads, gone is the tendency to fly head first over the handlebars.

As you do when your bike hits something at speed.

By taking the good bits of a bike (wheels, pedals and chain), and arranging them in a sensible way, designers of the recumbent version have created a format that looks bizarre, even unridable, but works beautifully. Though there are lots of varieties of recumbent bike, the common factor is that the pedals are out in front rather than beneath you, allowing a relaxed sitting-back posture which is also efficient for turning the pedals. All your body weight is supported on a mini sun lounger, so neck, spine, wrists, hands and backside don't suffer the contortions and pounding that they do on a conventional bicycle. Handlebars, positioned either above your lap or beneath the seat, are there for steering and operating the controls, not for leaning down on or pulling up on.

With that many differences, riding a recumbent is definitely a new skill



For adventure travel, writes Eric Kendall, don't sit up and beg – a recumbent cycle can take you further and faster than you might think possible

to grasp. The closer you get to one, the more you wonder whether some hideous joke is being played on you by the rest of the world. From swinging your leg over to falling off, everything is unfamiliar – there's not even much to hold on to while wheeling it to a quiet stretch of driveway for a tentative first go.

The process of learning to ride a bike, for most of us, happened too long ago to recall in detail, and it's probably just as well. Learning to ride a recumbent now, aged 31 and three-quarters, was essentially a repeat of that distant experience, but much quicker. Instead of Daddy running along behind with my best interests at heart, it was the man from the shop who owned the fantastically expensive machine that I might just crash. Shaking him off, whatever his motivation, was an excellent incentive to get it together.

It's all about taking a chance: balancing on two wheels never seems a good bet in the cold light of day. Sitting back with your legs out in front

of you makes getting the pedals going much more committed than when they're just a few inches from the ground and you're only a step away from standing on your own two feet. As you prepare to push off for the first time, being too analytical and thinking about how you'll balance makes life hard. Letting things come naturally, aided and abetted by minimal cerebral input, is the way to do it, so the experts say: I had no problem at all.

Once you're on your way, within minutes it feels so natural that you can begin to appreciate what's going on. Contrary to expectation, the handling is precise – the bike goes where you point it – and it feels amazingly responsive to your pedalling input; these are definitely machines for speed. With the excellent weight distribution (low and towards the back) braking is encouragingly smooth and powerful, and while banking over to corner fast, you can still pedal with ample clearance.

Just to confuse things, and to gratify small boys in men's bodies, re-

cumbent bikes add another dimension. They are mercifully simple to ride – you can even leave your feet on the pedals when you come to a halt – though going, not stopping, is what these things are all about. They're so low to the ground that the sensation of speed is fantastic. The handling is quick and active, and lifting the inside wheel in tight corners gives a satisfying, slightly hairy indication that you're trying hard enough; lifting it in shallow bends means you're about to break the land speed record. On the right surface, you can even do hand-brake turns, which should be reason enough for people to go out in droves to buy them.

Recumbents can be successfully ridden in all kinds of traffic conditions but they excel on the open road, going faster, faster and with less effort. The mechanics of having a seat behind you to resist your push against the pedals is superb, allowing your upper body to relax and your lungs to breathe efficiently while your legs do the work. The aerodynamic advantage is also significant, particularly with the addition of

Fast track: you may look bizarre on a recumbent bike but you'll find the sensation of speed uplifting
Photograph: Eric Kendall

a fairing, which can be fitted to most designs of recumbent cycle.

Where to learn/try/buy

Some bike shops stock recumbents, but for the UK's biggest range and expert tuition, try Future Cycles (01342 822847) in Sussex. For the full experience they offer day and weekend hire, with money back if you like it so much that you decide to buy a recumbent. Weekend breaks including B&B, tuition and two days' hire cost £115.

Other outlets where tuition is available are: Gear of Glasgow (0141 3391179) and the Avon Valley Cyclery (01225 442442).

Prices for recumbent cycles start at £399, though the average is around £1,000; recumbent trikes cost from £1,600 to £3,000.

Go faster

The British Human Power Club (BHPC), 15 Station Road, Dyce, Aberdeen AB21 7BA, is the racing organisation for recumbent cyclists. Races are held at closed tracks and often involve recumbents with full body shells. The streamlining creed is based on the fact that on a conventional bike at 18mph, 80 per cent of the forces slowing the vehicle come from air resistance, and as the speed increases, so this percentage rises. No wonder cyclists always think they're riding into a head wind.

Speed records, such as 68.7mph for the solo flying 200-metre record, and 48.5 miles for the world hour record, make you wonder why conventional bike racers bother to get on the road at all.

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To book call Dalhousie Castle on 01875 820153 or e-mail info@dalhousiecastle.co.uk quoting The Independent offer.

For pirates, painters, and anyone else who loves a Cornish fishing village, Polperro is the place, says Linda Cookson

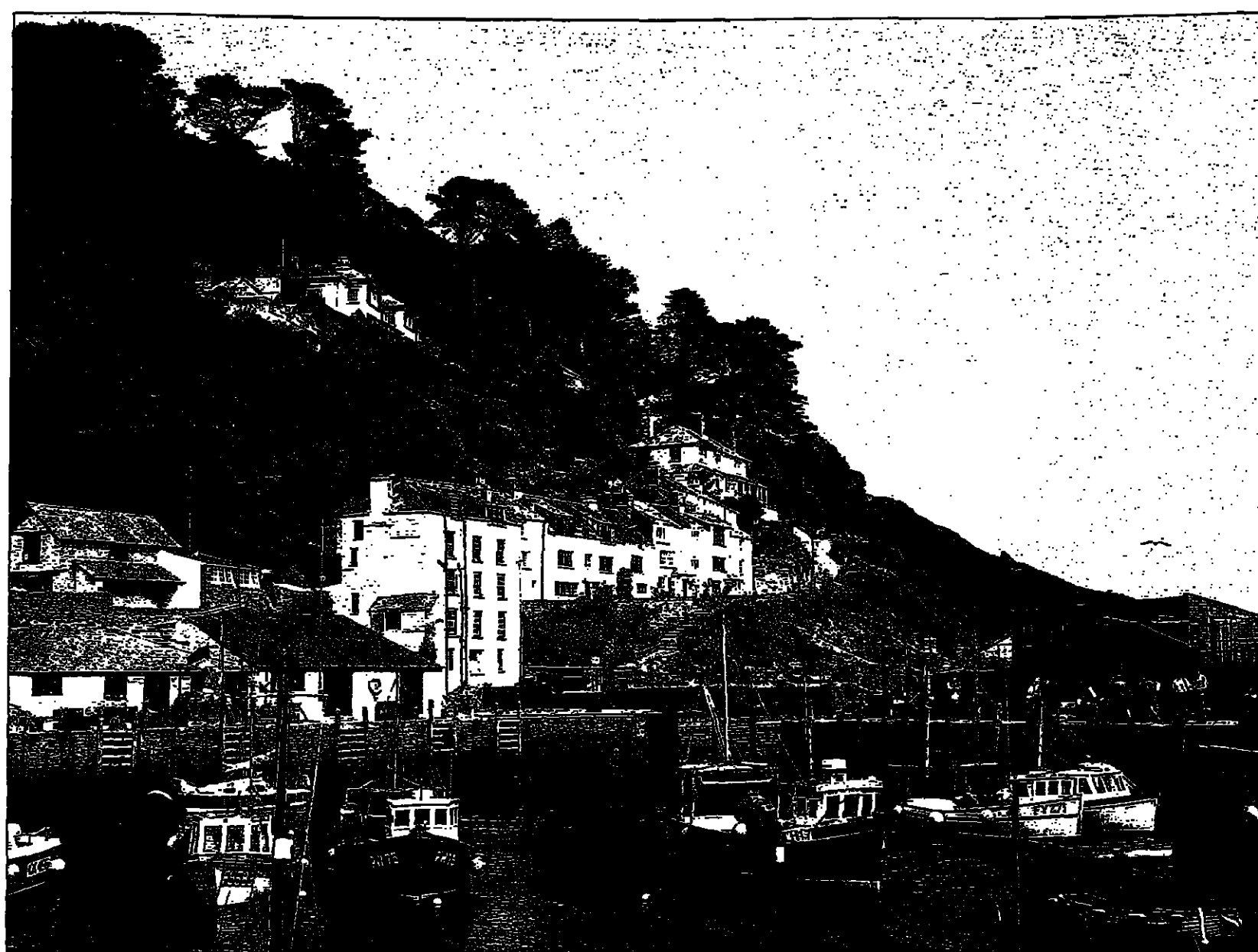
For all you landlubbers, there are two ways into the famously beautiful Cornish fishing village of Polperro. You can approach by road or by cliff path.

If you choose the road, you'll need to leave your car at the public car park at the entrance to the village and walk the half mile or so down towards the harbour. Or - if you're that way inclined - take a ride with the Polperro Horse Bus Company and make your arrival by horse and cart. The disadvantage of this option is that it will be hard to kid yourself that you're not a tourist. Thousands of visitors descend daily on the village at the height of the season. In minutes you'll have joined the throng and be jostling through the gamut of party stalls, ice-cream barrows, postcard shops and the like. As tourist spots go, Polperro is by no means unbearably twee. But it's a pity to hit the lucky picnic charm shop and the fish and chip outlet ("Chip Ahoy!") before you've had even a sniff of sea air.

Far more enticing is the approach on foot, along the glorious National Trust coastal path linking the village with the fishing towns of Looe in one direction and Fowey in the other. It's hard to imagine a more magical first view of a village anywhere in the world. As you round the headland, a tiny, picturesque harbour unfolds before you. The accompanying vista of centuries-old fishermen's cottages nestling in narrow crooked streets and clinging to steep hillsides is a scenic artist's fantasy.

Whichever way you arrive, a major joy is to explore the winding streets and passageways, and to marvel at the character and charm of the buildings. Straight lines are hard to find - amid a jumble of assorted shapes and styles, architectural pragmatism rules supreme. Individuality flourishes. Jaunty windowboxes and hanging baskets create a riot of colour against the paintbox white of most of the cottages. One house has been covered entirely in shells brought home by its owner, a sea captain.

Polperro remains a working fishing village, though the standard catch is now mackerel rather than the pilchards that used to abound. But it is still steeped in the history of its heyday as a smugglers' den. Nestled in its sheltered ravine setting, the village became an ideal location for smuggling in the 18th century - with consignments of contraband grain, gin and tobacco coming from Guernsey. This history is celebrated in Polperro's memorabilia-packed



Not just a pretty place: Polperro, with its hidden harbour, was an ideal location for dodgy dealing in the 18th century. Photograph: Robert Harding Picture Library

If any sort of walking feels too much like hard work, take one of the half-hourly trips on a local fishing boat along the coast from the harbour. Or why not let a pony do the trekking? The stables at nearby Lantlos Barton (01503 272192) hire out horses for accompanied cliff-top rides. Absolute beginners can clomp contentedly along the rocky pathways in the knowledge that they're on two safe pairs of hooves.

For a staunch Methodist community (John Wesley preached there twice in the 1760s) Polperro is reassuringly well stocked with pubs. My own favourites are the Blue Peter, on the end of the quay, and the Three Pilchards, beside the harbour. The Noughts & Crosses, formerly a bakery, is also worth a visit. Its name comes from the book-keeping habits of its 17th-century owner.

Eating out in the evenings is excellent. All pubs offer food - the Crumplehorn Inn, at the entrance to the village, is the best in my opinion - and there's a surprisingly wide variety of restaurants. For a change, try The Mermaid Pizza.

To see Polperro at its loveliest, stay overnight. For longer stays, hiring a cottage is easily the best bet. The main specialist provider is Polperro's Black Horse Agency which handles some 26 holiday properties (01503 272303).

For shorter stays, the Crumplehorn Inn - which also offers self-catering apartments - does bed and breakfast for two people sharing a double room at £40 a night (01503 272348). Bed and breakfast in the Old Mill House Hotel in the centre of the village (01503 272362) costs £45 for a double room (extra charge for the four-poster).

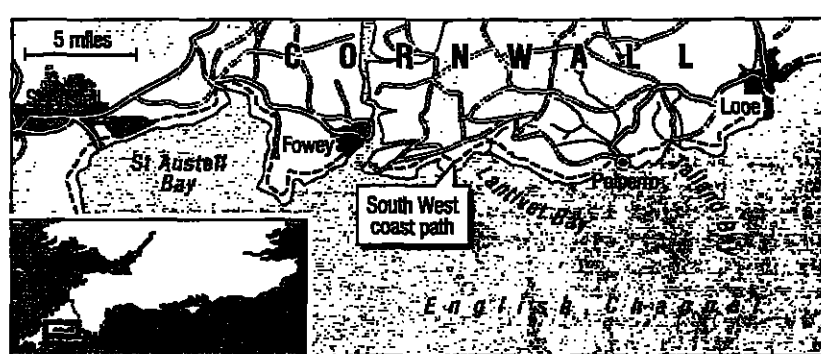
But if money is no object, venture that mile or so along the cliff path to the Talland Bay Hotel (01503 272667). This attractive country house, dating back to the 16th century, is set amid gorgeous gardens and overlooks the sea. Dinner, plus bed and breakfast for two sharing a double room with sea view, could set you back as much as £190 at the height of the season. But prices are less steep at this time of year: dinner, bed - in a room with a sea view - and breakfast cost £72 per person, and there's a special offer of £110 per person for two nights including dinner and breakfast, but minus the view.

For details of the 1998 Polperro Festival of Arts, Music and Drama, call 01503-272129

Singing in the smugglers' den

Heritage Museum of Smuggling and Fishing, situated in an old pilchard factory overlooking the harbour.

During this century, Polperro has become more of a magnet for artists. The East Cornwall Society of Artists mounts an annual exhibition at the Ebenezer Gallery near the entrance to the village. And down by the quayside, the Peak Rock Artists Studio & Gallery is a working studio open to the public. From 20-28 June, the third annual Festival of Arts, Music and Drama will take place in the village. Performers will include the famous Polperro Fishermen's



Choir, plus visiting artists such as the guitarist Bert Jansch and the poet Brian Patten, whose Cornish poem for *The Independent* appears opposite.

Should you weary of the bustle within the village itself, do remember the loveliness of the coastline. The sandy beach at nearby Talland Bay is only a mile along the Coastal Path, with Looe some three-and-a-half miles farther on. If you don't quite feel up to that exertion, you can always head inland, following the stream from Talland Bay to Bridals Lane, once a spot notorious for smuggling runs.

TEL: 0171 293 2222

TRAVEL: OVERSEAS, UK

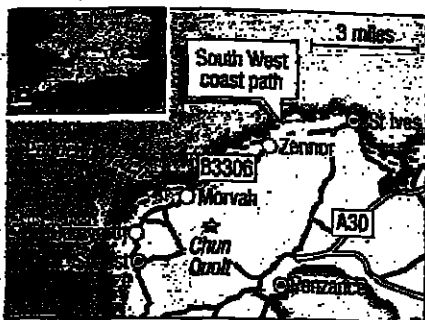
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سكنى من الامم

Going round in stone circles

Weekend walk Jonathan Sale makes tracks in Penwith



Morvah sounds like an Old Testament city put to the sword by the Medes and Persians. It is in fact a small village on a loop off the B3306, the narrow, winding and up-and-down coast road along the rocky north coast of Cornwall stretching from St Ives to St Just. It is also the starting-point for a circular walk in the Penwith district that takes you past ancient stones, disused tin mines and a stretch of the South West Coast Path that is less fished than the well-trodden Zennor section to the east.

Walking along the B3306 towards St Ives, you immediately see on the right-hand side of the road a yellow arrow indicating the first of several stone stiles. These lead to a minor road which, as you follow it to the right, rapidly becomes a minor track. Turn left at a crossroads, or rather, cross-roads, and almost immediately a faded sign points to a grassy path on the right.

Ahead, through bramble and gorse, looms Chun Quoit, a 12ft-square "capstone" resting on four uprights (well, they're more or less upright). The most striking of the third millennium BC chambered tombs in the Penwith region, it was originally the centre of an eroded long barrow 35ft in diameter.

An arrow set into the path here points left to Chun Castle. The high point of the walk - the spot is 216 metres above sea level - this Iron Age fort was constructed in the third century BC. Its walls, faced with granite blocks, form two low, battered circles.

Return to the Quoit and keep going in the same direction, on a path that takes you over the magnificently named Woon Gumpus Common. Arrows and stone stiles lead to a wide track which has a road junction. Continue in the same direction along the road (sign to Levant Mine) but leave it very soon at a bend by taking the substantial track to your left. Where this bends sharply left to a farm, go straight ahead up a footpath which passes, via a short detour to your left, a striking rocky outcrop known as Carn Kenidjack.

The path carries on up a hill so spectacular that someone left a radio mast on it. From here can be seen a horizon filled with tin mine chimneys. Clearly dating back to the days before planning permission was required, they represent a substantial portion of Cornwall's industrial revolution. Carry on down from here, across a track and over a stone stile, until the footpath comes out at a house named (doubtless correctly, although for me the mist got in the way) Atlantic View. The road leads to the tiny village of Carnyorth.

Cross over the T junction with our old friend

the B3306 on to a road that develops into a track. Go over a stone stile, then bear left along a rough footpath along the side of a field. Keep the mine chimney roughly ahead and aim to the left of a small village named Nineveh (just like the one in the Old Testament which really was destroyed by the Medes).

Turn right on to a track and then immediately left into a field. The last of the inland stretch, it is also the trickiest, a basic westwards scramble along the side of fields as first one and then another mine chimney heaves into view. When you finally reach them, you are on the coast path, the easy bit for the directionally challenged. Turn right and you reach, just after Botalack Head clinging to the cliffs and sticking out into the Atlantic, the 1840 Levant Beam Engine, which is now in the care of the National Trust.

The next stretch displays a fascinating struggle between the old industrial desolation caused by mining and the new vegetation seeking to cover it. Soon Cornwall's dark Botalack mills are left behind and the view ahead shows the features of Cornwall so good at breakers, headlands, tall chimneys and, just beyond the low volcanic slab of The Avarack, the lighthouse on the bulge known as Pendennis Watch. Off the shore is The Wra or Three Stone Oar, a lethal rock demonstrating why the lighthouse seemed such a good idea in the first place.

On the other side of this headland lies Portherras Cove, the only beach on our rocky walk. Crossing a stream on the far side and going up the side of a hill, you come to a signpost indicating a choice of route. For the shorter option, follow the arrow pointing inland on a path leading to a road. At a right-hand bend with a building on each side of the road, climb a stone stile beside a patch of grass on the left. Go straight across the field and pick up a succession of stiles that take you to a farm gate. Morvah church is just a few more yards down the road to your left.

For the slightly longer, and more pleasant, option, take the left fork along the cliffs, turning right at the second signpost next to a small hut. Follow the nettles until you come to Morvah church.

Ordnance Survey: Landranger 203 (Land's End). Coast of Cornwall Leaflet 11 (Cape Cornwall to Logan Rock) covers part of this walk; send 80p plus a first-class stamp to: National Trust, Cornwall Regional Office, Llanhydrock, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 4DE.

King Arthur's sleepless knights

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What are they up to now, those medieval heroes?

Sir Lancelot, old and wheezing;
Sits in the back room of the
King Arthur Tavern;

His mind half gone,
He mistakes the glass of wine
shaking in his arthritic
hands for the Holy Grail;

Sir Perceval's a write-off,
Released under a care in the
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He's back in Tintagel
Embarrassing the day-trippers:
In the King Arthur car park
Sir Bedivere's arguing with the
grockles.

He's been short-changing them
again.

Sir Galahad's in trouble -
He's been slipping love potions
into young girls' drinks -
The blonde waitress at the
Camelot Cafe

Has shopped him at last,
Poor old geezer, mumbling
about sheaves and sworns;
His innuendoes ripe as melons:
Guinevere couldn't stand him:

She gave up her job at the
Excaliber Spud-U-Like
And ran off with a prai from
the Cornish tourist board.

Merlin fared little better;
His magic reduced to trivia
He turned himself into a
million and one souvenirs
And opened a gift shop.

Perceval, Bors, Gawain, Morgan le Fay, the
Fisher King,
The poet shamans, the whole
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Wander back and forth
between the lands
Of the living and the dead and
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The heat is on

A taste of ... Jamaican jerk seasoning. By Nikki Spence

In Jamaica "jerk" means just one thing – hot, spicy barbecued meat that is now so popular that it has become the unofficial national dish, and is being sampled all over the world. Here in Britain, jerk cafés and restaurants are starting to appear and jerk seasoning is also available in supermarkets.

"Jerk" – where meat (originally pork but now most commonly chicken)

is rubbed with a paste of Scotch bonnet peppers, nutmeg, pimento, cinnamon, spring onions and salt and pepper, and then cooked over charcoal and green pimento wood – can be traced back to the middle of the 18th century, and the guerrilla war between ex-slaves (known as Maroons) and the English. Wild boar was a source of food for the rebels, and the jerk seasoning was a means of preservation. The meat was slathered with the aromatic spice combination and wrapped in leaves before being cooked in pits filled with hot stones, or grilled slowly over a fire.

This secret way of preparing pork was mainly concentrated in the Boston Beach area in the parish of Portland, the home of the original jerk pits. Then, about 15 years ago, it started to gain popularity. Jerk huts sprang up on roadsides all over Jamaica, and soon local companies such as Walker's Wood were buying pig carcasses, jerking the meat and selling it to local bars and cafés.

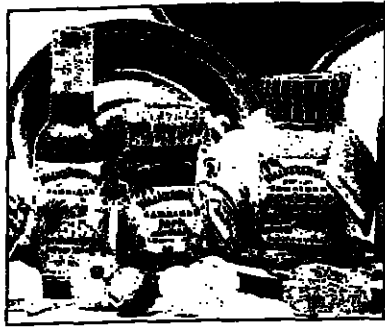
According to the founding director, Roddy Edwards, no one had thought of bottling the jerk seasoning itself until the company started to get enquiries from tourists asking where they could buy it.

"The fact that people were bothering to write to us all the way from America and elsewhere made us realise that we were definitely on to something," says

Roddy, whose company now supplies Tesco, Sainsbury and Waitrose.

"Jerk seasoning does seem to have captured the imagination, not just in Jamaica but increasingly all over the world."

"I think that what's so special about it is that it isn't just about heat, but is a blend of flavours that people really seem to enjoy."



A taste of jerk

● When Jamaica plays Wales at Ninian Park in Cardiff on Wednesday, the usual stadium fare of hot dogs and burgers has been ditched. Instead, the crowd will be able to sample jerk chicken and patties.

● Jerk isn't just for meat-eaters, according to the consortium Jamaica 98, which is currently promoting Jamaican food and drink in staff canteens in conjunction with Gardner Merchant. Apparently, jerk tofu and stir-fry veg have been going down well with all the companies that have tried it – including the BBC and London Underground.

● Enco Products, maker of Dunn's River Jamaican Jerk Seasoning, has produced a free Caribbean recipe booklet. Available with a large SAE from Dunn's River Cookbook Offer (10S), Enco Products, Welham Green, Hertfordshire AL9 7HP.

For more tastes of Jamaica, try ...

● Ackee. This fruit with yellow flesh tastes remarkably like scrambled eggs when cooked. Served with salt fish, this is the official national dish.
● Callaloo. A leafy, spinach-like vegetable often used as a base for thick soup flavoured with pork or crabmeat.
● Escovitch fish – fish fried or grilled, and then pickled in a tangy sauce.
● Festival – deep-fried, slightly sweet dumpling

Solid, write-on antiques

The stuff of ... status. A good desk is not only impressive, it can be a sound investment, writes Sally Staples

Whether you are the chairman of a multinational corporation or starting up in business on your own, the most prestigious object in your office will be the desk.

It may be an imposing item of antique magnificence, or a more modest piece of furniture that will blend comfortably into a home that is also an office. Whatever your needs, Jan Elias at the Dorking Desk Shop in Surrey, one of the largest suppliers of antique

desks in the country, offers plenty to choose from. There are partners' desks where two people can sit opposite one another, narrow bureaux with sloping tops and drawers beneath, bureau bookcases and even old school desks jostling for space in the shop showroom.

Most of the stock is classic Victorian, and full restoration work can be undertaken on the premises. Many of the desks are bought at auction and given a face-lift before being sold. Most prices range from £1,000 to £5,000, depending on the size, condition and age of the desk.

"Desks are a status symbol and they need to give out the right signals. In a doctor's surgery or a solicitor's office the desk itself and how it is positioned can affect the atmosphere," says Mr Elias.

The old mahogany and oak desks have solid wooden drawers – no plywood or chipboard bases – and are hand-dovetailed. These pieces of furniture were built to last, and often the only restoration needed is a new leather top.

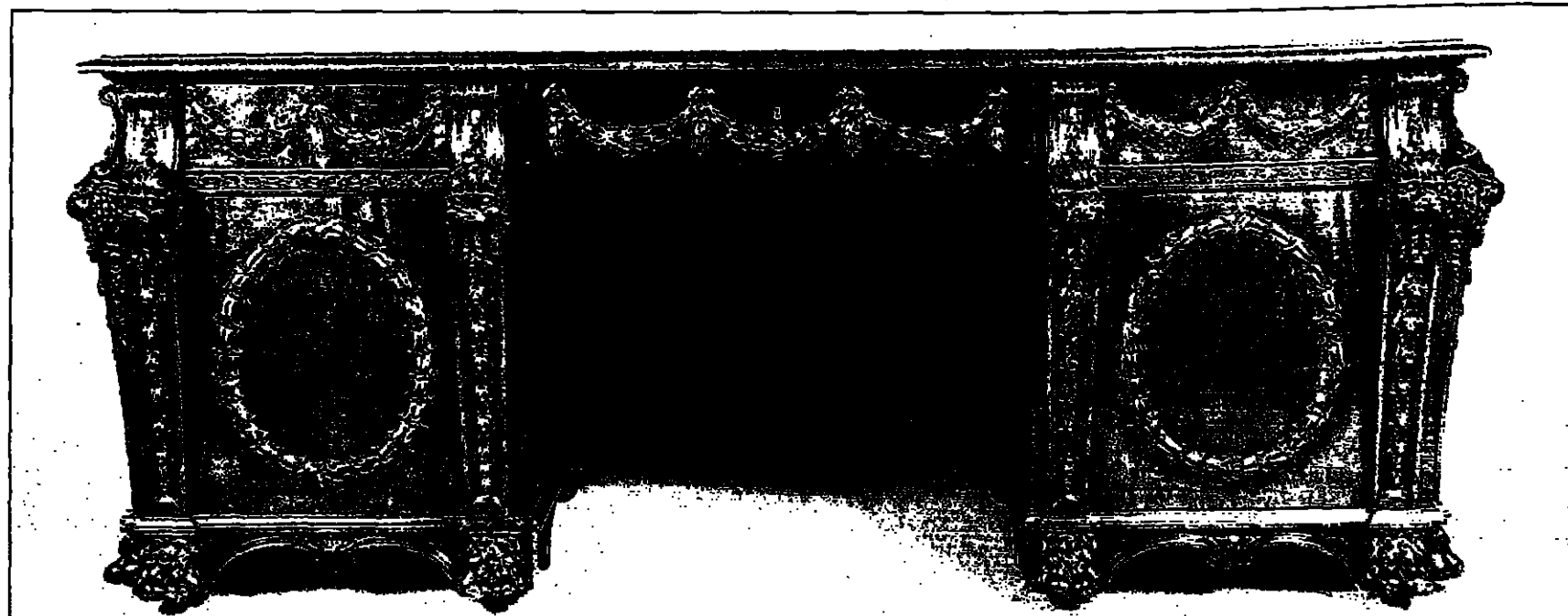
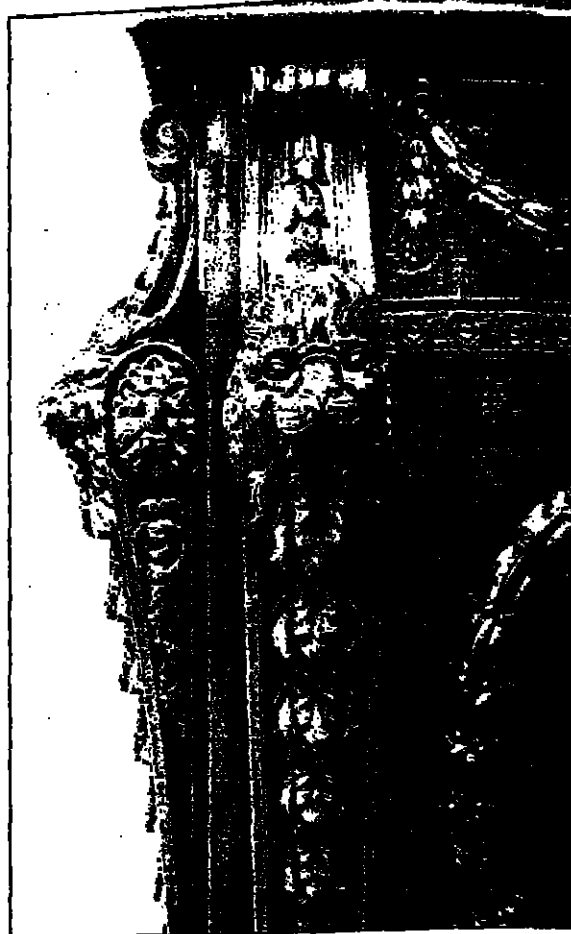
"No two antique desks are quite the same," Mr Elias continues. "And as an increasing number of people are now working from home they often want a distinctive desk with character that is also a nice piece of furniture. Also, it's a good investment. People spend

£15,000 on a car that will be written down for a small percentage of that value in five years. But spend £5,000 on an antique desk, and you will find its value will steadily increase."

The Dorking Desk Shop has sold Sir Winston Churchill's desk, and many other well-known antiques have passed through its doors. Currently its most valuable piece is a copy of Chippendale's Nostell Priory desk. The Neoclassic-style copy, crafted in 1865, has superbly detailed, carved swags and flowers, and a smooth, black hide leather top. The price tag is a cool £65,000.

Among the desks, you can glimpse a variety of antique furniture including a Victorian mahogany chaise longue (£1,450), a Victorian rocking chair (£480), a grandfather long-case mahogany clock with special naval features (£4,850) and even a pair of brass candlesticks (£160).

The Dorking Desk Shop, 41 West Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1BU (01306-883327). Open Monday to Friday 8am-5.30pm; Saturday 10.30-1pm; 2-5pm. A second showroom is now open at Stony Croft Farm, Reigate Road, Betchworth, Surrey RH3 7EY (01737-845215).



GAMES

On last week's *Desert Island Discs* on Radio Four, the mathematician Ian Stewart mentioned a probabilistic paradox that fools most people who are presented with it. It goes like this:

Imagine you are a contestant in a game show. You have a choice of three questions correctly, and can now open one of three doors to determine your prize. Behind one door is this week's star prize, a magnificent new car; behind each of the other doors is a goat.

You select one of the doors, and the game show host – who knows which door has the star prize behind it – then opens one of doors you did not select and shows you a goat behind it. He then offers you the chance to change your mind. Do you take it?

Most people, said Stewart, stick to their original choice, reasoning that they now know the car is behind one of the still closed doors; so the chance they have picked the right one is 50-50,

so there's no point in changing from their original choice. But, he said, this strategy is incorrect, for they will double their chance of getting it right if they change their mind.

I had met this problem before, and did not totally believe it. I still was not sure that I believed it after Ian Stewart explained it to Sue Lawley. (He said something about people viewing their choice as a single event, when in fact it was two events, one before the door was opened and the other after, but when she asked him what his next record was I'm afraid I lost the thread of the argument.)

Later I went away and thought about it and finally convinced myself with what I think is a simpler argument. Think about what happens when you are offered the chance to change your mind. If you picked the right door the first time, then you will be wrong to change your mind; if you picked the wrong door first time, then

you will be right to change your mind. But (and here is the crucial point) you will have picked the right door only one in three times. So if you change your mind, you will pick the right door two out of three times. If you don't change your mind, you will end up with the right door only one in three times.

Despite the logic of this, it is, as Ian Stewart pointed out, totally counter-intuitive. You pick a door, your host shows you a goat behind one of the other doors – but you knew he could do that, so what difference can it possibly make? So to show your strength of character, you refuse to change your mind. But unless you are particularly fond of goats, you will be wrong.

After convincing myself of the truth of all this, I tried an experiment on my children by conducting a series of trials with a pencil sharpener hidden at random under one of three mugs. On

each trial, one child would guess which mug had the object beneath it, then I would reveal one empty mug and ask whether he wanted to change his mind.

After 16 trials, eight with a child who generally remained faithful to his original choice, and eight with one who changed his mind most of the time, except when he changed his mind about changing his mind, my data table revealed that there were eight trials in which a change of mind had been registered, and eight trials when it had not. On the non-mind-changed occasions, only two had successfully located the pencil sharpener; of the mind-change trials, five had been correct – which is as close as anyone could hope to the theoretical prediction of one-third and two-thirds.

All the same, I still find it difficult to understand what difference it makes for the host to reveal a goat that I knew had to be there anyway.

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Jon Gower, 30, bass guitarist with the rock group Jel

My dad played in a band when I was young: "Dave Champion and the Fabulous Strangers". They got on really well, in fact. You couldn't call them famous, but they were well known in their local area as being a skiffle group that had moved on to the surf scene.

When he wasn't working, my Dad would play the usual sort of stuff with me: toy cars and things. Quite boring really, but he was good at conversations, and he'd make up stories and silly poems. He was always doing loads of different voices – hundreds of them – and he still does it now. That's the sort of fun I had with him when I was younger.

Later on, it was real cars and motorbikes, which are not really games, and at school I played football, but only because you're supposed to. You know, the teacher would say: "Right, you've got

football now. Off you go," and you'd have to. I preferred track events and stuff like that, because it's more about personal achievement than beating somebody else.

I don't particularly like having to rely on luck, so I find board games boring. They go on and on, and there's never any real challenge. All you do is spin a die and go where you've got to go, so you can't really control the game at all. I think things should be made to happen.

I played loads with my sister when she was younger. We still play together, but it's more teasing-type games. At the moment she's got a new boyfriend, and I really tease her about that. She goes absolutely scater.

My dad is the world's worst tease, and that's what it's been like since we were younger. Although nowadays, more times than not, I'll get the better of him.

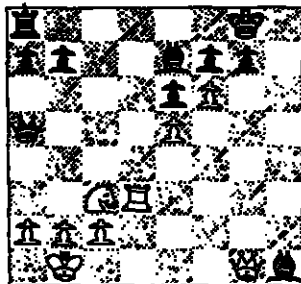
Jel's first album, *'All the Blinding Menace'* (Kantane Records), released this month, is available at all good record stores.

CHES: WILLIAM HARTSTON

Probably the biggest difference between the chess of today and the game of three or four decades ago is the speed at which information travels and theory changes. Even 20 years ago, players would rely on newspapers to get the details of games played a few days earlier in international events. Now they get impatient if they cannot find all the moves on the Internet within five minutes of the game's finish.

One result is that opening innovations have a far shorter shelf life. In the old days, a player could hoard a new idea for months, or even years, and might even catch two or three opponents with it before news got around. Now, the pace of tournament play means any original idea has to be played instantly, before someone else gets the same idea.

This climate of throwaway originality was well illustrated by one game in Monaco this week. Viswanathan Anand has been having a good deal of success with a line of the Sicilian in which Black invites an attack on his king. In several recent games, Anand has shown some surprising resources for Black. In one line, however, Alexei Shirov spotted a killing improvement for White. He would, no doubt, have loved to save it for unleashing in an important tournament game, but with every sharp variation now being analysed by powerful

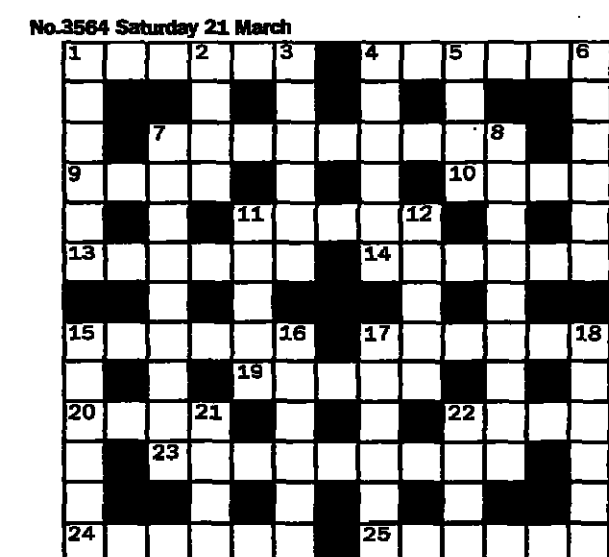


computers, he could be certain that if he did not play it at the first opportunity, either someone else would get there before him or Anand would discover it himself.

That is one reason why Shirov played 16.Qc3! in place of the older 16.Qf4 against Anand in the Amber Rapidplay event in Monte Carlo. The other reason is that Shirov is such an imaginative player, he knows that he can afford to squander one good idea, for another one will surely come along close behind. In the final position (see diagram) 20...g6 21.Qxh1 leaves Black helpless against the threat of Rh5.

White: Alexei Shirov
Black: Viswanathan Anand
1 e4 c5 11 Kb1 Rd8
2 Nf3 d6 12 b4 Bd7
3 d4 cxd4 13 Bxd3 b6
4 Nxd4 Nf6 14 e5 dxe5
5 Nc3 Nc6 15 f5 Bc6
6 Bg5 e6 16 Qc3 Rxd3
7 Qd2 Be7 17 Rxd3 hxe5
8 0-0-0 Nxd4 18 hxe5 Bxe2
9 Qxd4 0-0 19 gxf6 Bxh1
10 f4 Qa5 20 Qg1 resigns

CONCISE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Murmur (6)
- Influence (6)
- Make intoxicated (9)
- European city (4)
- Imprint vividly (4)
- Shape (5)
- Scandinavian country (6)
- Window in roof (6)
- Protect (6)
- Bank worker (6)
- Sweetening agent (5)
- Jardy (4)
- Old (4)
- Astonish (9)
- Menace (6)
- Piercing (6)

DOWN

- NZ people (6)
- NE river (4)
- Strip of material (6)
- Away from home (6)
- Destiny (4)
- Restricting rope (6)
- Direct (9)
- Study of derivations (9)
- Breakfast, dinner etc (5)
- Channel port (5)
- Choose (6)
- Sweet-sounding (6)
- Zodiac sign (6)
- Type of tyre (6)
- Other (4)
- At a great distance (4)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Dive, 3 Versions (Dimensions), 4 Creed, 10 Impasse, 11 Top, 13 Lookalike, 14 Spirit, 16 Rosary, 18 Ineluctable, 20 Eira, 22 Denigrate, 23 Carpa, 25 Gold dust, 26 Omit. DOWN: 1 Dust, 2 Via, 4 Editor, 5 Soprano, 6 Obsolete, 7 Scenery, 8 Idol, 12 Principal, 14 Shindig, 15 Ice-cold, 17 Recess, 19 Tuck, 21 About, 24 Kim.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer West	
North	South
♠ 9 6 4 3	♠ 10 5 2
♥ J 6	♥ Q 10 7 5
♦ K Q 9 7 6	♦ 10 5 3
♣ Q 9	♣ 10 7 4
West	East
♠ A K Q 7	♠ 10 5 2
♥ A 9 3 2	♥ Q 10 7 5
♦ 8 4	♦ 10 5 3
♣ 8 6 2	♣ 10 7 4
South	North
♠ J 8	♠ 10 5 2
♥ K 8 4	♥ Q 10 7 5
♦ A J 2	♦ 10 5 3
♣ A K J 5 3	♣ 10 7 4

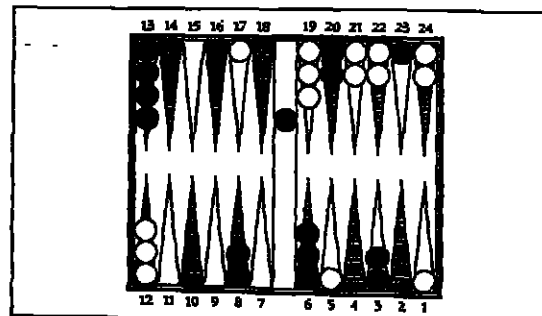
It is an old joke that you can always tell when your partner leads a singleton, for he always does so with his left hand rather than his right. (NB This is NOT serious advice.) Some similar ruse should be adopted (standing up, perhaps?) when you intend your card to have suit preference connotations. It would have helped on this deal.

West, playing five-card majors and a strong no-trump, was reduced to opening One Club. North friskily overcalled with One Diamond and rebid his suit when his partner forced with Two Clubs. Losing patience, South jumped to Three No-trumps and all passed.

West led ♠ A and studied the fall of the three, two and eight closely. He continued with ♠ K, and could now be sure of the position, for his partner's play had shown three cards in the suit. It was easy for him to lead ♠ 7 to East's 10 and, apparently, equally easy for East to return a club. After all, West had bid the suit. This was not a success, and a pleasantly surprised declarer claimed the rest of the tricks.

What went wrong – apart from West's failure to stand up? The spade position after the third trick was as clear to East as it was to West. If West had led a club entry rather than one in hearts, he would have led ♠ Q at trick two instead of the king. His real choice strongly suggested that he wanted a return in the higher-ranking suit – hearts.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



Should I take or should I drop? Quite often emotion gets in the way of good judgement on this dilemma, but if we can eliminate the emotion, how should you decide whether to take or drop? First you must evaluate the position and decide on a game plan. Having decided that, you try to estimate your game-winning chances. If you expect to win one game in four, then you probably have a take. Even if you expect to win only one game in five, you may have a take if the game has a long way to go, as owning the cube has considerable value.

The other critical factor is the gammon threat (if it exists). If you expect to lose a gammon, say, 10 per cent of the time, this can change your decision. The rule of thumb is to halve the gammon percentage and add it to the basic 25 per cent take point. So if you expect to lose a gammon 10 per cent of the time, your take point becomes 30 per cent. Estimating the gammon potential of positions comes only with experience; as a simple guide 20 per cent of all games played to completion (that is, not ended by a double) are gammons. Thus in most early or middle games your take point is normally nearer to 30 per cent than to 25 per cent.

Look at the position above. Black has just been hit and stayed on the bar. White now doubles; should Black accept? Black's plan is to anchor on White's 2-point if he can, but he may not get the chance, as White will attack the blot on the 2-point next roll. My estimate is that Black will lose at least 30 per cent gammons from this position. So his take point is 40 per cent. Can Black win two games out of every five? The answer is no – his structure is not good enough to contain White if he gets a shot, and his racing chances are minimal. Therefore Black should drop the double.



Racing at home in Paradise

ON the Caribbean island of Barbados earlier this month, as preparations were underway for the Test between the West Indies and England, thoughts briefly turned away from the batsmen's track to the race-track for the annual running of the Sandy Lane Gold Cup at Garrison Savannah.

Such is the exodus of British racing's finest to Barbados for the winter, the island is nicknamed "Newmarket-on-Sea" and this year's cast list included the trainer Michael Stoute and the jockey Pat Eddery. Sponsored by the hotel Sandy Lane, which is partly-owned by the legendary Irish punter J P McManus, a crowd of 25,000 - 10 per cent of the island's population - cheered home this year's winner, Ferdinico.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ASHDOWN

is thought to be the favourite though this may prove to be as futile as football's attempt to switch from the succinct, familiar "linesmen" to mealy-mouthed "referees' assistants".

Today's race is certainly an interesting one, however, with Farmost and Running Stag, first and second in another valuable all-weather event, the

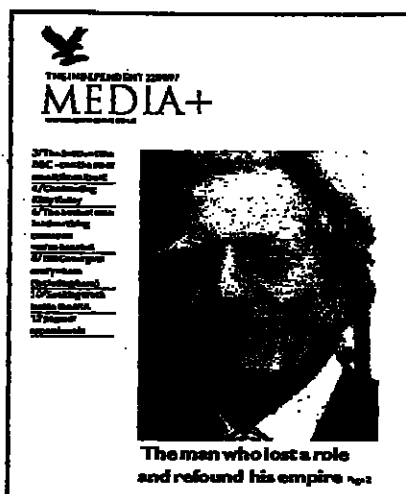
a dish will seem indispensable come Northernberland Plate day in the summer, today's offering makes little appeal.

● The Tote is to team up with Sporting Index to offer spread-betting facilities, including on the racecourse. "Spread betting is an important area, particularly among our higher-staking customers," Peter Jones, the

right one

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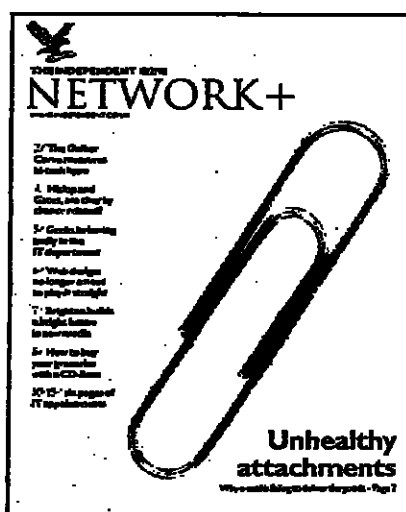
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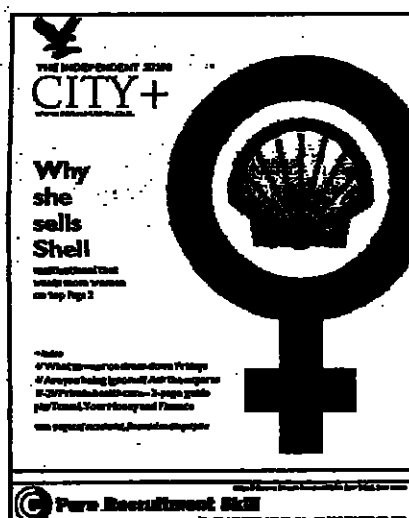
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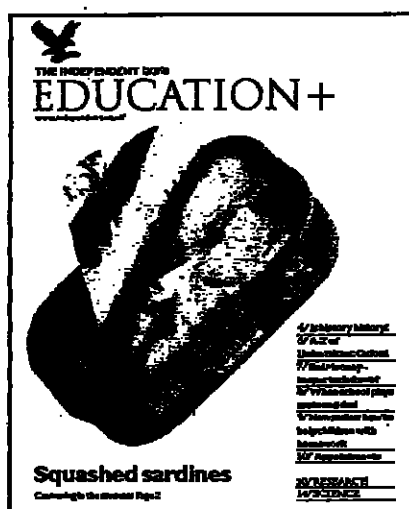
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THE INDEPENDENT

Capricorn suffers another collapse

One black cloud in the doldrums can disrupt all our plans



GRANT DALTON

Merit Cup's skipper expects a frustrating time ahead on the Whitbread Round the World race

WE HAVE been expecting someone (hopfully Merit Cup) to make a break during this sixth leg of the Whitbread Round the World race. However, the most significant action has been Silk Cut doing a good job close inshore, but being steadily reeled in as the yachts further offshore get a little more pressure.

We expect the fleet will split as the yachts line themselves up for the run through the doldrums. First in and first out is the aim and a quick exit could be the winning edge of this leg. Once you're in the doldrums, it's purely a matter of chance what shape you're in when you emerge from the other side.

There is breeze in the doldrums - quite a strong breeze sometimes - but it is very patchy and shifts direction constantly. It's not unusual to be sitting motionless with the only sound the slop of the water against the transom.

Some of the boys on Merit Cup have been through the doldrums several times. Experience doesn't make it any easier to cope with a capricious breeze which deserts you while favouring another yacht only a few hundred metres away.

Frustration is not a descriptive enough word to describe the feeling as you watch it sail off towards the horizon. That is

when the frustration levels get really high. The guys on watch are straining as they concentrate on keeping the boat moving, trying to catch any bit of breeze that's going.

The pressure on watch captains Kevin Shoebridge and Mike Sanderson, who are responsible for keeping the yacht moving at maximum possible speed, is relentless. The helmsman and trimmers cannot afford to relax for even a few seconds.

In the navigation station, Mike Quilter, famous for his seemingly laid-back outlook at all times, is fuming at the injustice of it all - how a big, black cloud can make his tactical

plan virtually worthless in just a few minutes.

In these sort of conditions, it's not unknown to have 10 sail changes in an hour as the wind shifts direction and the pressure rises and falls. In the heat of the doldrums it is very hard work.

The position schedules, which we get every six hours, impose a sort of terror campaign on board. A good sched, where we have made up a bit of time or even swapped positions on the water, is greeted with cheers. A bad sched casts a pall of gloom over the boat, even though in the circumstances prevailing on Thursday and Friday this week, the positions

and distances between the yachts were insignificant.

For example, the 18.00 GMT position on Thursday had Merit Cup second, 17.2 miles behind Silk Cut. We were looking good. From sixth place to second in six hours.

Even though we knew that it didn't mean much, we glowed for a moment; then one of those big, black clouds smothered us, stopping Merit Cup dead in the water. Every boat in the fleet made distance on us.

At 18.00, when we were second, 3.9 miles separated the second and seventh-placed yachts. At midnight, 4.7 miles separated them, but the positions had

changed remarkably. Merit Cup went from her hard-earned (helped by a little luck) second place to sixth; Innovation Kvaerner from third to second; EF Language from fourth to fifth; Chessie Racing from fifth to third; Toshiba from sixth to fourth.

Once we're out of the doldrums it's a 2,000-mile reach on starboard tack to Barbuda, an island in the Caribbean where we "turn" for Florida. Then the wind should be behind us for the run to Fort Lauderdale.

So far on this leg the heat has been remarkable. A chicken stew is not my idea of an ideal lunch when the tropical sun is

heating the deck to sole-burning point and below decks the temperatures must be at least 50C.

There's nowhere to go to escape the heat. On deck there's no shade; below decks it's even hotter and it's beginning to reek of damp sails and clothes.

It was not this hot when we came south through the tropics on leg one and I don't remember it being this hot last time on New Zealand Endeavour or the time before on Fisher and Paykel New Zealand.

This is not a time to have trouble with the desalination equipment. It is working overtime to provide enough fluid to replace the sweat.

Halifax farewell to Thrum Hall

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

ANOTHER famous old ground passes into the mists - and, in this case, snows, hails and gales - of history tomorrow when Thrums Hall stages its last game.

The home of Halifax since 1886, the notoriously bleak stadium reached by the ominous route up Gibbet Street, gets the chop after a celebratory match against Leeds. The proceeds will go straight into the kitty that will enable Halifax to buy into The Shay, the home of their football neighbours Halifax Town, which is currently being redeveloped.

Few will shed tears for the antiquated facilities at Thrums Hall, but, with its slope and stands crowded tight to the touchline, it has always been a dramatic place to watch a game.

"A lot of people in the area, plus supporters of other clubs, will have many cherished memories of what remains one of the most atmospheric of rugby league grounds," said John Burnett, the captain of Halifax during one of their most successful eras and now the chairman of the appeal committee

that has the task of raising £140,000 towards the cost of the first stage of The Shay redevelopment.

So far, they have managed around £50,000, so the hope is that Thrums Hall will be full to its present, restricted capacity of 7,500. The match is all-ticket, but they will be on sale on the day of the match.

Apart from a parade of some of Halifax's greatest players of the past, the current team will be close to full strength. The half-backs Chris Chester and Gavin Clinch have both been passed fit after taking blows to the head in the controversial Challenge Cup defeat at the London Broncos and only Kelvin Skerrett is regarded as a doubt.

Leeds, knocked out of the Cup five weeks ago, will be grateful for something approximating to a serious match to help them prepare for the start of Super League in two weeks. Their side, also virtually at full strength, includes their new signing from Australia, Brad Godden, who will make his debut in the centres.

Elsewhere, the First Division table is starting to take shape, with Hull KR and Wakefield

Trinity defending the only 100 per cent records tomorrow before facing each other next weekend.

Rovers are at home to struggling Rochdale Hornets, who gave their coach, Shane Tupaea, the dreaded vote of confidence this week, while Trinity host inconsistent Swinton.

The Sheffield Eagles' centre, Keith Senior, has failed in his appeal against a four-match ban for punching Castleford's Barrie-Jon Mather in their Cup tie last Saturday. His suspension was left unchanged at a second hearing yesterday, which means that he will miss his side's semi-final against Salford and the first three Super League matches.

Nigel Wright, Wigan's injury-plagued stand-off, is to have another operation on his ankle next week.

Malcolm Reilly, the former Great Britain coach who last year with the Newcastle Knights became the first foreigner to win an Australian Grand final, has returned to this country following the death of his father.

● Rugby league will plant another foothold in Scotland with the formation of Glasgow North. They join Whitecraigs, based in the south of the city.



Britain's Laura Davies, trying to become the first golfer to win an event five times in a row, trailed Cindy Figg-Currier after the first round of the Standard Register Ping tournament in Phoenix, Arizona. Davies shot a three-under-par 70 in the opening round but was unable

to catch Figg-Currier, who was just two strokes off the course record with her six-under 67.

Non-professional golfer - male or female - has won a tournament five years in a row. And if Davies takes the title, she will receive around £80,000

for the winner's cheque and a £187,500 bonus.

Davies is the only LPGA player to capture the event four times in a row, having won the PGA Four Legends Golf Series in 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997. Photograph: Scott Troyano/AP

Silk Cut holds off pack of pursuers

Sailing

By Stuart Alexander

IN temperatures approaching 100F down below and in burning sun and soaking humidity up on deck, Britain's Silk Cut was watching her rivals close the gap yesterday on the sixth leg of the Whitbread race. Lawrie Smith still had a 2.7-mile advantage with the chasing group of four shuffling and reshuffling their places behind him.

Without full satellite communications, Silk Cut's crew were not always sure where they stood or what the others were doing, but it was for everyone a routine of constant sail changing to match the up and down puffs of wind and squalls.

With the effect of the doldrums yet to be felt strongly, the fleet continued to make faster than predicted progress as it lined itself up for what could virtually be a restart in the tradewinds, which will take them up through the Caribbean.

Most relaxed about the lottery factor was the overall leader, Paul Cayard, although he admitted "the light winds running is not EF Language's forte." On the threatening Chessie Racing, the watch captain, Fuzz Spanhake, reported that being "surrounded by thunderstorms, lightning, and heavy rain" had provided one of the race's most interesting nights.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE Sixth leg (4,740 miles). Silk Cut (GB) 1st, 18.00 GMT; Innovation Kvaerner (Nor) 2nd, 17.2 miles behind; EF Language (US) 3rd, 17.2 miles behind; Chessie Racing (US) 4th, 17.2 miles behind; Toshiba (US) 5th, 17.2 miles behind; 6th (US) 17.2 miles behind; 7th (US) 17.2 miles behind; 8th (US) 17.2 miles behind; 9th (US) 17.2 miles behind.

TODAY'S NUMBER 51

The percentage of respondents to an international internet poll who want the 2008 World Cup to be held in England. Only 12 per cent of the 15,364 fans polled from more than 100 countries were from the United Kingdom. Just over one in five people who voted favoured South Africa, while only 12 per cent backed the bid by Germany, who have been considered to be England's greatest rivals to host the tournament. Sixteen per cent supported other possible venues around the world.

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Fife positive despite record against Hawks

Ice hockey

THE Fife Flyers forward John Haig has warned their opposition in the British National League play-off semi-finals that they will not be written off. The Kirkcaldy team meet the hosts Kingston Hawks in the second semi-final at Hull Arena today, face-off 4.30pm, with Guildford Flames facing Telford Tigers at noon. The winners advance to tomorrow's final at 4pm.

Many see the Scots as the underdogs as they have lost six of the eight meetings with the Hawks this season - including all four at the Arena. Fife, however, with 16 wins from their last 17 games, are the form team and Haig, who had an unsuccessful second spell at Hull, said: "We're not scared of anyone. We have beaten everybody this season and don't fear Kingston, Guildford or Telford. At this stage it is down to how you play on the day. Nerves and many other factors come into it. In fact, we play better when people write us off."

Kingston's general manager, Keith Millican, who received a boost when his defenceman Lee Brattwaite declared himself fit, is remaining level-headed, acknowledging Fife will be tougher than some imagine. He said: "We won't be taking Fife lightly. We won't be over-confident. I just hope we don't freeze on the big occasion because that has happened before."

Guildford Flames, the British National League and Southern Conference champions, meanwhile, are praying their forward Barclay Pearce will be fit to face Telford after hurting his knee. A decision will be made at the last moment.

John Lawless, the Telford manager, said discipline would be vital. The former Cardiff and Manchester coach said: "Guildford are a quality side and we will need to stay out of the box. We need everyone to be on the same page. One thing's for sure, it's going to be an exciting weekend."

Burks saved for Leopards' finale

Basketball

By Richard Taylor

GREATER London Leopards' guard Eric Burks misses tomorrow's Dairyale Dunkers North v South All-Star game at Sheffield Arena as his coach, Billy Mims, protects one of his greatest assets for the final two weeks of the Budweiser League season.

Burks injured a knee during Leopards' 85-70 defeat at London Towers last weekend and has been replaced by Thames Valley Tigers' Jason Siemon in the South team, coached by Mims.

Leopards, league leaders and defending champions, play Watford on Wednesday, then face three testing final games against Derby Storm, Tigers and away to Sheffield Sharks.

Burks played for 37 minutes in Thursday's 81-72 win over Crystal Palace, but will be at tomorrow's game only to sign autographs. Mims said: "Although Eric is disappointed he knows

the importance of the league games in our bid to keep the title. The break will give him plenty of time to rest before we play Watford."

Birmingham Bulls must win all six of their remaining games, beginning with tomorrow's All-Star curtain-raiser against Sheffield, to keep the pressure on Leopards.

Defeat last weekend cost Bulls and Sharks the chance to close the gap. Bulls coach Mike Finger said: "I'm sure Sharks aren't very happy right now and neither are we. We're two angry teams both wanting to prove a point."

● Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the NBA's career leading scorer, was arrested by US Customs officials on Sunday for possession of six grams of marijuana at Pearson International Airport. The Toronto Star said Abdul-Jabbar, 50, the former Los Angeles Lakers centre was fined \$500 (£330) before being allowed to board a flight to Los Angeles. He was released without conditions.

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AUSTRIA						
Braxell	Powder on Zappone glacier	75%	10.3	30	60	Thick cloud
BULGARIA						
Pamporovo	Fresh snowfall-packed base	100%	17.3	45	115	Snow
CANADA						
Lake Louise	Firm packed snow	100%	6.3	90	205	Sunny
FRANCE						
Alpe d'Huez	Hard-packed snow	75%	0.3	85	280	Settled
ITALY						
Cortina	Marmolada glacier good	100%	11.3	30	70	Cloudy
NORWAY						
Gaia	Firm packed snow	90%	11.3	60	60	Some cloud
SPAIN						
Serra Nevada	Springlike conditions	90%	8.2	30	60	Variable
SWITZERLAND						
Verbena	More Fort offers packed powder	95%	13.3	20	110	Pt cloudy
UNITED STATES						
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Free Cheltenham Three and tell bookies to take running jump



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV

HORSES are intelligent, I've always believed that, despite their propensity for allowing fat aristocrats to jump on their backs and pursue unsuspecting furry things. The proof came on Thursday during the Gold Cup (C4), when the Cheltenham Three - Cyborg, See More Business and Indian Tracker - saw the somewhat daunting seventh fence coming up, had a quick word between themselves, thought "Sod that for a game of unseated riders" and took off for the Cotswolds.

They must have been reading about the Tamworth Two, and reasoned, "Well, pigs might fly and horses might as well." No doubt dedicating their freedom dash to Butch and Sundance, they were off,

taking their jockeys hostage and leaving a gang of squealing punters in their wake.

Shouldn't joke, really, as it was an injury to Cyborg that caused the cock-up. Still, not many horses died over the three days. Far for the racecourse, really. As one of those vegetarian bleeding hearts who believe that non-human animals should have roughly the same rights as the homo sapiens variety, anything I have to say on the subject would be crushingly predictable, so I'll finish before I start.

During the Cheltenham Festival, any self-respecting television reviewer's mission is clear: cancel the afternoons, settle down with a notepad and ample supplies of a favoured in-

toxicant, and wait for inspiration to flow. Stuck in the office this week, I didn't have that option, and had to view most of the proceedings from the back of a telly-punters' scrum, but still, three days of elite racing amid a Bacchanalian free-for-all set in a rural idyll fit like the Côte d'Azur should have provided plenty of material.

Except for the fact that, as I came to realise over the three days, I really don't care about racing. I mean really, not in the slightest. The only thoughts I do have are for the high-calibre horseflesh induced by a mixture of cajoling and punishment to operate at maximum capacity for a few minutes in order to keep the bookmakers in business.

Still, there were a few sights to behold, such as the Queen Mother arriving in a borrowed Popemobile. There was nearly a national tragedy when one horse flicked its head penitently as the nonagenarian icon gave it a pre-race once-over, almost landing a blow on the royal bonce. You can see the caption: "Get that bloody woman away from me. Does't she know I'm a republican?"

There was plenty of upper-class silliness, especially among the owners, though my favourites were the owners of Upgrade, a winner on Thursday, who in all their Brummie arriviste glory came on like Harry Enfield's self-made "considerably richer than you" pair of horrors. "Up the Brits!"

shrieked the woman in an unwitting but brutal self-caricature. It's moments like this that bring home the notion that some people have too much money and too much time on their hands.

There was also the appalling Leslie Graham, who seemed to have wandered in from some dressage event next door and found herself by the rail with a microphone stuck in her hand, asking questions of a Gary Newbonesque gaucheness. I'm told that some trainers forbid winning jockeys from talking to her, and it would be nice to think that perhaps this was a quality control thing - "You're not to open your mouth to her until she comes up with some decent bloody questions!" Ap-

parently, though, it's simply because they have old-fashioned ideas that the riders' first words should be to the trainers and owners themselves, which seems fair enough.

I never like slagging off sportsmen for linguistic infelicities - it's rather like criticising Barry Davies for his pathetic inability to do a decent man-marking job on Ryan Giggs. But there was a delightful brief outbreak of the "literally" syndrome after the Gold Cup, from the winning jockey, Andrew Thornton. Questioned by Brough Scott (who, for all his experience as an interviewer, is like Graham without the riding togs), he proffered the view that, "this puts the icing on my season - literally," followed a

couple of sentences later by a reflection on his resurgence: "Literally - I was nearly on the scrapheap three years ago."

Television will never be able to do justice to horse racing until it's done in scratch-and-sniff sensurround. Going to the races is about so much more than what happens on the track - the bookies, the nobs, the Irish, the florid stink of booze and the grimace of cash. Compared to the grand social panorama it offers, for a non-gambler like me, the issue of which horse comes first is a minor matter, and I found myself musing on the beauty of the aerial shots and the splendour of the hills. Until the Cheltenham Three took off on their mad dash for freedom.

Mansell back on track for Ford

Motor racing

By Derrick Allison

NIGEL MANSELL ran down the steps on the BBC set of "Noel's House Party" and waved to the audience, but there was no garage or Mr Blobby in sight. It was for real - the former world champion was back in motor racing.

Mansell will drive a Ford Mondeo at three meetings in this season's British Touring Car Championship, which will earn him around £500,000 and doubtless boost the attendances at Donington in June, Brands Hatch in August, and Silverstone in September.

He maintains his role will be to back up Ford's regular drivers, Will Hoy and Craig Baird, but relishes the opportunity to complete a mission he started and was unable to finish five years ago. That venture in touring cars, at Donington, was interrupted by a serious accident which landed him in hospital with battered ribs.

Mansell was characteristically effusive about his new campaign and, although now aged 44, left open the door to a possible full-time programme in the future.

He also took the chance to have a side-swipe at Formula One in general and David Coulthard in particular for perhaps jeopardising his championship prospects by allowing through his McLaren-Mercedes team-mate, Mika Hakkinen, at the Australian Grand Prix.

He said: "I'm highly motivated and this will get the competitive juices going. I've got some unfinished business to attend to and hopefully this time I will finish."

"I'm here to complement Will and Craig, who are going for the championship, I'm not. But I have an open contract with Ford and I'm ruling nothing out in terms of a full programme in the future, either in this country or America."

"I never retired, I merely had a sabbatical. It wasn't right for me at this stage to do a full season, but the clincher was the chance to race at three historic circuits and hopefully bring the fans along to watch."

While he is content to play the supporting role in the Mondeo, he professed his astonishment that Coulthard surrendered victory, after a first-corner pact, to Hakkinen in Melbourne.

Mansell said: "If the championship was over I would not have a problem with it, but I was confused because it was the first corner of the first race. You don't give away four points unless you have a crystal ball and know you're going to get them back. I hope David doesn't regret it. What happened is not good for the sport."

"I would say David and Mika have an equal chance of winning the championship. The person who is more consistent will win it. McLaren have done an outstanding job."

"The other thing about Formula One now is that there are too many driver aids. Don't get me wrong, Formula One is the pinnacle but there are too many computer-controlled aids. I just think a driver should drive the car and carry it around. The good thing about touring cars is that the driver has a lot of input and the public can relate to the cars."



Queen of the castle: Paula Radcliffe, pipped for gold by Derartu Tulu at last year's cross country championships in Turin, is Britain's best hope of a medal in Marrakesh.

Photograph: Michael Steele

Radcliffe's chance to atone for missing title

PAULA RADCLIFFE has been a world champion for six seconds. She hopes to discover in Marrakesh this weekend what it feels like to hold that distinction for a longer period of time.

At last year's world cross country championships in Turin, the 24-year-old thought she had done enough to secure a senior title to add to the junior version she won in the snow of Boston seven years ago.

As she drove towards the finishing line, she allowed herself to believe that she had won - until Derartu Tulu, Ethiopia's Olympic 10,000 metres champion of 1992, sprinted home to take the gold.

Radcliffe, by her own admission, is a perfectionist. Her academic career - four A level passes at grade A, and a first class honours degree in European Studies from Loughborough University, hint at the diligence and intelligence she brings to her running.

It is an attitude she says she has inherited from her mother Pat, a deputy headmistress. "I like to do things properly or not at all," Radcliffe says.

For such a character, the experience in Turin was hugely frustrating, even if it did reflect huge credit upon an athlete who, three years earlier, had been told by a medical special-

ist that a foot injury might prevent her ever running again.

But it at least gave her a tangible reward for the talent which has been developed with such painstaking care by her coaches at Bedford and County Athletics Club, Alec and Rosemary Stanton. In her last two major championships on the track, the Olympics and the worlds, she finished the 5,000m a tantalising fifth and fourth respectively.

This weekend, the Stantons - who have coached her since

she was a 12-year-old also-ran - will be with her in Morocco as she seeks to go one better than she did in Italy last year.

That task has been complicated by the new format which has been introduced by the International Amateur Athletic Association, which has split the race into longer and shorter versions, over eight and four kilometres, which will be run today and tomorrow respectively.

Radcliffe, who recalls how exhausted she was after Turin, is likely to concentrate on to-

day's longer race, where she may or may not be facing her nemesis, Tulu is injured, but the Ethiopians have left a place open just in case she recovers.

Although the Briton feels the IAAF's action has diluted the strength of this event, she still faces the possibility of strong challenges from former champion Gete Wami, of Ethiopia, and Ireland's former world 5,000m champion Sonia O'Sullivan.

British athletics, which saw

its main administrative body collapse last October, is on something of a roll at the moment following the success at the European indoor championships, where Jonathan Edwards won an expected gold and Astia Hansen - also in the triple jump - and 3,000m runner John Maycock won unexpected titles.

Further success from Radcliffe, who has been training at altitude in Albuquerque, would maintain a welcome high profile for the sport.

She is unlikely to be surrounded by other British medalists. The men's team - from which the former European

cross country champion Jon Brown has remained absent as he concentrates on preparing for this year's London Marathon - is not likely to make any impact upon the African nations who have virtually adopted this event in recent years.

Paul Tergat, Kenya's world 10,000m record holder, is expected to lead his team to their 13th consecutive team title as he himself seeks a fourth individual title.

In the shorter men's event,

Daniel Komen, who broke the 5,000m world record in Brussels last year, is overwhelming favourite.

Leander on pole

Rowing

By Hugh Matheson

THE Tideway Head of the River Race from Chiswick to Putney today is likely to be dominated by Leander Club, the home of most of the leading men's group in the British National team.

Leander 1 has the World Championship coxless four of James Cracknell, Steve Redgrave, Tim Foster and Matthew Pinsent at its core and will lead off in front of University of London and two predominantly lightweight crews, one from London and the other from Notts County at three and four.

Oxford Brookes University, now one of the strongest clubs, will start sixth in front of the leading overseas crew, SC Zurich, from Switzerland.

The Tideway Scullers' School has a crew of genuine scullers, including the triple world lightweight champion Peter Haining at stroke, backed up by Guy Pooley, Wade Hall Craggs and Boris Mavra.

Molesey, with a crew of Olympic medallists, including the Searle brothers and Richard Stanhope, have been wallowing in the wake of first the Oxford and then the Cambridge Boat Race crews in practice but should move up from 20th.

The perfect weather conditions forecast, combined with a good flow of land water, will make for a fast time and Leander will have no inhibitions in proving the value of the first winter when the entire national team has been properly funded for full-time training. The gap between the full-timers and the rest is expected to increase sharply.

Fogarty trails in Slight's wake

Motor cycling

By Andrew Martin

IN THE early hours of tomorrow morning Carl Fogarty begins his quest for a third World Superbike championship against a field that is certain to test to the limit the capabilities of Britain's fastest man on two wheels since Barry Sheene ruled the roost in the late 1970s.

As all things '70s appear to be the height of fashion, the presence of a Briton leading the field once again would not seem too fanciful and the "Blackburn Buller" is certainly placed above all his countrymen to achieve the feat.

Fogarty is, famously, not a man to countenance any doubts in his own ability, but even the man who twice rode a scarlet Ducati to world titles may be inclined to see red after the post-

ing of yesterday's opening qualifying times in Phillip Island, Australia. Aaron Slight, Fogarty's former Honda team-mate, shattered his own lap record to take the fastest time.

There is no love lost between the New Zealander and Fogarty, so the man with the famously intense stare will no doubt blink twice at his own qualification time: he finished the session joint fourth, a little over 0.6sec behind the leader.

Fogarty was the runner-up in the series last year to the American John Kocinski, who has switched to Honda's 500cc grands prix effort. Foggy himself has also moved teams, linking up with the Performance crew managed by the former racer Davide Tardozzi. And happy he is too with the arrangement.

"I have a really good set-up, much better than last year. We are all pulling together. I feel

good with them, and they are working with me to get the bike how I want it," he said.

He needs to be. This season is far from a two-horse race, with the rapid Australian Troy Corser recording blistering times in the pre-season. In Misano, Corser dropped Kocinski's lap record. Then there is the anticipated challenge of America's Scott Russell, Japan's Akira Yanagawa and his Kawasaki team-mate Neil Hodgson as well as the Suzuki-mounted Jamie Whitham.

Even with his Ducati running well, Fogarty admitted: "It will be a tough year, certainly no easier than last season, even though Kocinski has gone."

"The real challenge will come from Slight. He is very motivated, has not won anything, and probably realises that this year is his last real chance of the taking the crown."

Leaders' tough trip

Hockey

By Bill Colwill

Canoeing, the National League leaders, travel to London for two tough fixtures this weekend. Today Cannock, who expect to be at full strength, play the unpredictable Teddington, who have Luke Hodges on his return after knee surgery, and tomorrow they move a little further south to take on Guildford.

Guildford, despite a recent run of good results, are still not out of the relegation zone. Their player-coach Ian Jennings injured a hand in the Inter-Services on Wednesday and damaged it again on Thursday. He plans to play and predicts that if Guildford beat Bedford Tigers today and rule out relegation, they will return to their natural attacking game and beat Cannock.

Canoeing, three points behind Cannock, are at home to the two bottom clubs - Beeston today and Doncaster tomorrow.

England and Scotland battles are always something rather special and this weekend's two women's games at Lilleshall are unlikely to be an exception. Scotland, who have already announced their World Cup squad for Utrecht in May, will be parading their selected squad on both days while England, who do not make their choice until the end of the month, will be using all 22 players from their training squad.

The International Hockey Federation has announced that the no offside experimental rule is to become permanent and that as from 2 July no more substitutions, except for injury, will be allowed at penalty corners.

ENST places its bid for Wembley

THE English National Stadium Trust yesterday finalised its bid to buy Wembley Stadium and begin a £200m redevelopment.

Arsenal last week announced that they had made a formal offer to purchase the stadium as their new home because of fierce local opposition to their plans to increase their 38,000-capacity at Highbury.

Wembley plc now has until the end of the month to decide between the two offers, which could be as high as £120m. The ENST's bid is backed by the UK Sports Council and the Football Association.

The Sports Minister, Tony Banks, welcomed the ENST's bid and urged Wembley plc to press ahead with contractual negotiations for the new English national stadium to ensure the

project can proceed on schedule. "I am delighted that following discussions between the English Sports Council and the FA an agreed Trust bid has been made," Banks said.

"Lottery funds have been earmarked for a new national stadium which will serve English national teams - including football, rugby league and athletic events - and provide a neutral venue for the climax of major club competitions. This is what sports fans want. Importantly, this bid will be a key component of bids to attract the World Cup in 2006, future Olympics and other international events to this country."

Meanwhile the World Cup campaign director, Alec McGivern, has warned that if Arsenal succeed in buying Wembley it

would be a major blow to the bid to bring the tournament home for the first time in 40 years.

Michael Owen could become the youngest ever winner of the Professional Footballers' Association's Player of the Year award. The Liverpool 18 year old has been shortlisted in his first full season in senior football. Other names on the shortlist include Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp and Manchester United's Andy Cole.

Leeds have snapped up Jamie McMaster, a 15-year-old Australian who went to the same Sydney school as their striker Harry Kewell. McMaster has just won a scholarship with the New South Wales Soccer Academy and will join Leeds in the summer of 1999. Leicester have turned down

an undisclosed bid from hard-up Portsmouth for Steve Claridge. The Leicester manager Martin O'Neill is adamant he will not let Claridge leave on the cheap after recalling the 31-year-old striker from his loan spell at Fratton Park. O'Neill said: "Portsmouth have made a tentative bid but it falls well short of our valuation. There are many ifs, buts and maybes."

Blackburn Rovers are looking to increase their capacity at Ewood Park to 40,000. Further redevelopment of the stadium is planned with a new 15,000-seat stand in the pipeline.

It would mean Rovers demolishing the existing Walker Stand which was not part of the massive redevelopment of Ewood earlier this decade. Blackburn are anxious to

increase their spectator capacity and their chief executive John Williams said: "It is part of an overall club plan to keep us ahead of the game. We need to have a bigger capacity as we look to continue to move forward. We are making moves to increase our supporter base outside the direct geographic boundaries and the new stand is all part and parcel of it."

Wolverhampton Wanderers yesterday signed the Rangers right-back Stephen Wright on loan until the end of the season. The 26-year-old, who has two full Scottish caps from the early 1990s, goes straight into the Wolves side for today's First Division game at Ipswich.

Since moving to Ibrox for £1.5m from Aberdeen in 1995, Wright has been beset by knee

injury problems and has had two cruciate operations.

"I have had a season in Rangers' reserves and I am now fit," he said. "I was sitting at home preparing for a reserve game at Dunfermline when the call came through that Wolves wanted to sign me. I'm delighted to be joining another big club."

The Aston Villa manager John Gregory is to offer new contracts to his goalkeeper Mark Bosnich and the midfielder Lee Hendrie.

The Villa striker Savo Milošević has been named in Yugoslavia's squad for their friendly with Colombia next Wednesday in Bogota. The Tottenham striker Jürgen Klinsmann has been named in Germany's squad for the friendly with Brazil on the same day.

SIDELINES

Blues and Blades trade in the black

FRED EYRE is the self-confessed Manchester City "nut" whose devotion survived a free transfer after he had been the club's first-ever apprentice, but today his professional interest

is in helping the FA Cup semi-finalists Sheffield United to accelerate City's slide towards third-grade football.

Eyre, now the chief scout for United, became a cult author in Northern sporting circles with the publication of *Kicked Into Touch* in 1981. The book hilariously chronicled the life and times of a failed footballer (20-odd clubs but only one League appearance, for Bradford Park Avenue in a 5-0 stuffing by Swans).

Willie Donachie's inside knowledge of United could help to counter Eyre's reports. Barely a month after he gave up coaching them to become Joe Royle's No 2 at City, the Scot followed Joe Mercer and Howard Kendall in being involved in the management of both clubs. Kendall, coincidentally, left each of them for Everton, where his deputy is another who served Blues and Blades alike, Adrian Heath.

David White and Michel Vonk, once Heath's colleagues at Maine Road, are now on the Bramall Lane books, while Paul Beesley (currently on loan to West Bromwich) made the reverse trip. Others who played for both clubs include Brian Gayle, Jamie Hoyland, Carl Bradshaw, Alan Harper, Ken McNaught, Simon Tracey and the striker whose misheard surname sparked a craze among City fans for waving blow-up bananas, Imre Varadi.

THE EX-FILES

Ten things that Forest's Dutchman Pierre van Hooijdonk might be missing today



- 1 Biking to work. The Netherlands has more cycle paths per square mile than any other European country.
- 2 The cafe society of Amsterdam, although it has been said that a bad afternoon at the City Ground is similar to an afternoon in a coffee shop. Both render you strangely numbed and crying with hysterical laughter.
- 3 A night in the Leidseplein entertainment district of Amsterdam. Safer and less seedy than a Saturday in Nottingham.
- 4 Windmills.
- 5 The Alkmaar cheese market on Fridays.
- 6 Tulips.
- 7 The world's largest garden, at Keukenhof. Like Forest, its beauty is said to be an enigma. Unlike Forest, it attracts 800,000 in the eight weeks per year that it is open.
- 8 Potting around in Delft, home of the Netherlands' china industry.
- 9 Liberalism.
- 10 Dykes. Forest may find one useful if they return to the Premiership and want to avoid shipping goals and going straight back down again.

NAME OF THE GAME

No 27: THE GABLE ENDIES

Few clubs have a nickname as unlikely as Montrose's, but the derivation of the name is less than romantic. The Scottish Third Division club are so called because of a style of house building popular in the town.

THIS WEEK

On 22 March last year, Sunderland met Nottingham Forest. The match finished 1-1, leaving Forest 19th in the Premiership and Sunderland three places higher. While the sides were both happy to have come away with a point, they were envious of their then fellow strugglers (and current fellow high-flyers) Middlesbrough, who beat Chelsea 1-0 to take all three points in their game and move clear of the relegation zone. Chelsea, who meet Boro in the Coca-Cola Cup final next week, may take heed from another event this week last year. Liverpool reached the semi-final of the Cup-Winners' Cup, "Liverpool back in the European big time," said one headline, somewhat prematurely.

HISTORY LESSON

When England play Switzerland in a friendly international next week it will be their first visit to Bern for 44 years. The last time the two sides met in the Wankdorf Stadium was in the 1954 World Cup. It was England's second pool game, following a 4-4 draw with Belgium, and a 2-0 victory over the home side guaranteed a place in the quarter-finals (in which England lost 4-2 to Uruguay). One lesson Glenn Hoddle might like to draw from the 1954 game is that losing players through injury or illness need not be a bad thing. Stanley Matthews and Nat Lofthouse had to pull out on that occasion but their replacements, the Wolves pair of Jimmy Mullen and Dennis Wilshaw, went on to score England's two goals.

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

Transfers
Free transfers or undisclosed fees
Unites moved
Jamie Pollock (midfielder) Bolton to Manchester City (£200,000)
Darius Milne (defender) Norwich to Charlton (£250,000)
Terry Scully (midfielder) Manchester City to Queens Park Rangers (£250,000)
Steve Davis (defender) Barnetley to Oxford Utd (£75,000)
Neville Southall (goalkeeper) Everton to Stoke
Vince Bartram (goalkeeper) Arsenal to Gillingham
Lee Maher (midfielder) Huddersfield to Hearts
Lee Beardsley (defender) Notts County to Queens Park Rangers
Matthew Brazier (defender) Queens Park Rangers to Fulham
Rory Sedgewick (midfielder) Mansfield to Macclesfield
Paul Stephenson (forward) York to Hartlepool
Steve Bull (defender) York to Darlington
Adrian Littlejohn (forward) Plymouth to Okeham

Loans/trials
Romulo Wolkowicz (defender) Manchester Utd to Stockport
Steve Gullan (forward) Nottingham Forest to Grimsby
Andy Hughes (midfielder) Okeham to Notts County
Steve Wright (defender) Rangers to Wolves
Rae Ingram (defender) Manchester City to Macclesfield
Martin Phillips (forward) Manchester City to Exeter
Ray Kelly (midfielder) Manchester City to Viking Stavanger (Nor)
Gastiano Giallappa (forward) Nantes to Bournemouth

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Aaron Lawrence, one of Jamaica's goalkeepers, trains at Ealing, west London, yesterday in preparation for tomorrow's game against Queen's Park Rangers Photograph: Peter Jay

Loftus Road the first stop for Jamaica

QUEEN'S PARK RANGERS and Santos of Brazil have little in common, but they will soon have had a shared experience. Along with sides as diverse as Wales, Saudi Arabia and South Korea, they will have met the Reggae Boyz of Jamaica on the football field and experienced the hype surrounding them off it.

Since 16 November last year, when Jamaica became the first English-speaking Caribbean nation to qualify for the World Cup finals (and the island was granted a public holiday), the Reggae Boyz have become national heroes. As they prepare to meet Queen's Park Rangers tomorrow, and Wales in Cardiff next Wednesday, optimism is running high.

"There is a tremendous feeling in Jamaica. Everyone is singing and praying for the football team," the president of the Jamaican Football Federation, Captain Horace Burrell, said yesterday at a reception at the Jamaican High Commission

in London. "It has given the nation so much hope. They are an inspiration to show people what they can achieve."

There are currently seven English-based players in the squad. Darryl Powell, the Derby midfielder, became the latest addition this week, joining his clubmate Deon Burton, Fitzroy Simpson and Paul Hall of Portsmouth, Robbie Earle and Marcus Gayle of Wimbledon, and Frank Sinclair of Chelsea.

These players may become central to the World Cup squad, but it was primarily Jamaica-based players, spearheaded by the forward Andy Williams, who did most to secure qualification over the past two years.

Questions have been asked whether the players' varied origins may present difficulties come the summer, but Jamaica's coach, the Brazilian Rene Simoes, said last week that there was not a problem. "I hold discussions with [long-standing squad members] to evaluate whether these [over-

The hype is growing as the pride of the Caribbean prepare for their appearance in the World Cup. Nick Harris reports

seas-based] players will fit in with the team chemistry while they are trying out before inviting them officially to join the squad," he said. The Simoes approach would appear to be supported by the fans at home. Last month, the English-based Deon Burton was voted Jamaica's Sportsman of the Year.

The island's previous attempts to qualify for the World Cup were less successful than this time. Their first two efforts, for the 1966 and 1970 tournaments, were fruitless. Their campaign running up to 1974 ended in ignominy after 17 players were suspended for bad behaviour on a tour to Bermuda, and Jamaica withdrew to restructure their side.

They failed to qualify in 1978 and did not even attempt to get to Spain in 1982 due to

insufficient funds and a poorly prepared team. In 1986, they were unable to attempt to qualify because they had failed to pay their Fifa affiliation fees, and in 1990 and 1994 they were simply not good enough.

Under Simoes, however, Jamaica have become the powerhouse of Caribbean football. In 1996 they were awarded Fifa's "Best Mover" accolade. In February this year they finished a respectable fourth in the Gold Cup tournament, and they currently stand at No 33 in the world rankings and fear nobody.

On their current tour, the side will play up to 12 games in six countries in 10 weeks. Although their schedule will take them as far afield as the Far East and Iran, it will not be too taxing, according to officials.

"Jamaica's situation is unique," Horace Reid, the general secretary of the JFF, said. "The players based in Jamaica are not playing in top leagues day-to-day, and need that experience. We need to give the players the maximum exposure possible." He added that the English-based players will not be expected to play in all the warm-up games.

Whoever eventually represents Jamaica in France, Bernard Burrell, a London-based correspondent for Radio Jamaica, says the success of the team will have repercussions far beyond the island. "It's no longer just a Jamaican thing," he said. "It goes beyond political and cultural boundaries. This is a phenomenon." He added that the team have fanatical support throughout the Caribbean and large fan bases in the United States, Britain and Africa. "I've even had Nigerians coming up to me saying that they want to see the Jamaica games."

The appeal of the side has

not been lost on the marketing men. The team filmed an advert for the Jamaican Tourism Board last week which will be shown around the world. Throughout yesterday's press conference, Captain Burrell repeatedly interrupted to clarify who are the Boyz' official sponsors. "Joe Bloggs clothing are the official sportswear sponsor," he said. He declined to say how much their involvement was worth, but £1m has been suggested by some sources.

"I'd just like to clarify that Carpor International are the official kit sponsors," Burrell said later, after being passed a note to remind him. Similar notes reminded him to mention Cables and Wireless, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Courts Furniture.

The Reggae Boyz' World Cup odyssey is expected to generate in excess of £10m for football at grass-roots level in Jamaica. That might mean it will not take another 32 years before they qualify for the World Cup.

Injury rules Gallacher out of Scotland squad for warm-up

By Alan Nixon

KEVIN GALLACHER will miss Scotland's World Cup warm-up match with Denmark because of a nagging stomach strain. The Blackburn Rovers striker failed a fitness test yesterday and his club manager, Roy Hodgson, withdrew the Scot from the party to face the Danes on Wednesday.

Instead, Gallacher will be working on his fitness at the end of a frustrating month in which he has also been suspended for three games. "I would not do my-

self any justice for Scotland. I would rather stay here and get myself fit and be back for the next league match," Gallacher said. "My stomach is just not right. I've done a lot of work in training this week, maybe too much. I've had a test but it's not right yet. I will just have to keep working on my recovery programme."

Falkirk travel to Love Street for a First Division match against St Mirren today believing they can still fulfil their fixtures. It is understood they are £1.5m in debt, with the Inland Revenue owed £400,000 of that sum and

it is estimated these debts could be rising by around £30,000 a month. Although the club can expect a financial boost from their Scottish Cup semi-final appearance against Hearts, a liquidator has been appointed.

The players have agreed to take a 50 per cent cut in pay to help ease their financial problems. However, to secure their long-term safety a new owner is now viewed as essential because of the club's rising debts.

Wim Jansen, the Celtic head coach, is anxious for normal service to be resumed at Aberdeen

after lecturing his players on the lessons they must absorb if they want to lift the title. Jansen took his team aside this week to talk through what went wrong last Sunday at home to Dundee United, when Celtic let a one-goal lead slip in reckless pursuit of a decisive second strike.

That meant a chance to move seven points clear at the top of the Premier Division was spurned. Jansen said: "Against Dundee United we played very well in the first half, but lost our shape at times in the second to draw 1-1, and we have spoken

about this problem because it is very important for the way we want to play."

With Eoin Jess back in form and the Scotland squad, Celtic will miss the influence of Alan Stubbs (groin) at the back on a day when defeat, if Rangers were to win at home, would transform the championship picture.

Rangers recall their 31-year-old midfielder Ian Durrant to the squad that faces St Johnstone at Ibrox. Walter Smith's side lie five points adrift of Celtic and three behind second-

placed Hearts. He will be able to call on the midfielder Jonas Thern, who returns from suspension, but both Paul Gascoigne (ankle and stomach injuries) and Brian Laudrup (back) will miss the game.

St Johnstone are chasing their first double over Rangers in 27 years after winning at McDiarmid Park earlier in the season. But their manager, Paul Sturrock, knows they face a daunting 90 minutes at Ibrox. "Rangers are in a must-win situation so we can expect a tough game," he said.

سكنا من الامل

Chelsea to face Italian challenge

By Catherine Riley

CHELSEA, England's sole representative in Europe following the exits of Aston Villa and Manchester United earlier this week, have been drawn against Vicenza in the semi-finals of the European Cup-Winners' Cup.

Following a nervous start to Thursday's quarter-final second leg, Chelsea completed a 5-2 aggregate victory against Real Betis. Their next opponents were in even more impressive scoring form, beating the Dutch side Roda JC Kerkrade 5-1 on the night, 9-1 on aggregate.

However, despite that performance, the Italian side are struggling in the bottom half of Serie A, which has given Chelsea hope of reaching their first European final for 27 years.

The Chelsea player-coach, Gianluca Vialli, was delighted after his side avoided the favourites, VfB Stuttgart, who must play Lokomotiv Moscow, but said: "Whoever we drew in the semi-finals was going to be very tough. It's a lottery really."

"Vicenza are not doing very well in the league, but that's because I'm sure they've been concentrating on European competition. They have no superstars, nobody in the Italian national team, but they're a team who play for each other. I've played against Vicenza many times over many years - first of all in the lower division when I was with Cremonese."

"It's going to be very interesting going there now with

three Italians in our side. I know their manager quite well and he's an excellent organiser.

"Their ground is quite tight and the crowd are close to the pitch, a bit like an English stadium. And I'm not so sure it is best for us to play away first."

"So long as we go there and play positively and don't make too many silly mistakes we can do it. But we can't play for 0-0

European Cup Semi-finals

Juventus (It) v Monaco (Fr)
Real Madrid (Sp) v Borussia Dortmund (Ger)
First leg 1 April, second leg 15 April

Cup-Winners' Cup Semi-finals

Vicenza (It) v Chelsea (Eng)
VfB Stuttgart (Ger) v Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)
First leg 2 April, second leg 16 April

Uefa Cup Semi-finals

Atletico Madrid (Sp) v Lazio (It)
Internazionale (It) v Spartak Moscow (Rus)
First leg 31 March, second leg 14 April

in the away leg. We are not very good at that, it seems.

"And in any case, it is dangerous to try to play for 0-0. It can make the home leg very tense and I believe it is better to risk a few mistakes in the first leg by trying to score goals instead of leaving everything up to the home game."

Vicenza's next two Serie A games are against Roma at home tomorrow and away to Milan the following Saturday, and Vialli will send two of his

coaching staff, Graham Rix and Eddie Niedzwiecki, and also his assistant manager Gwyn Williams to spy on them while he concentrates on next Sunday's Coca-Cola Cup final against Middlesbrough.

In the draw for the semi-finals of the European Cup, last season's finalists Juventus and Borussia Dortmund remained on course for a rematch in the final.

Dortmund, who beat the Italian champions Juventus 3-1 in last year's final in Munich, will face Real Madrid, while Juve, bidding for their third successive final, were drawn against Monaco, who ousted Manchester United on the away goals rule at Old Trafford.

For Monaco, the only club left in the competition never to have won the title - or any European competition - the draw was not what they wanted.

"This is the most difficult draw that that could have happened to us," their technical director, Henri Biancheri, said. "Everyone wanted to play us, but we drew United and we are still here. All the teams have won many titles and we've won nothing up to now, so we just have to work with what we have."

In the Uefa Cup, Lazio and Internazionale also avoided each other, raising the possibility of an all-Italian final and an Italian clean sweep in all three competitions. Inter, last season's losing Uefa Cup finalists, will play Spartak Moscow, while Lazio drew Atletico Madrid, the conquerors of Aston Villa.

No resolution of World Cup tickets dispute

THE European Commission said yesterday that it had still not yet received any new proposals from the organisers of the World Cup about making the remaining tickets for this year's finals available outside France.

"There is no reply yet from CFC (the organising committee) I'm afraid," a commission spokesman said.

The commission wants the small amount of tickets left - 160,772 - to be sold entirely to non-French fans, but last week

the CFC offered foreign federations only 50,000 tickets.

The French sports minister, Marie-George Buffet, said last week it was "quite unacceptable" that France should have to make all remaining tickets available to foreigners as the event had been paid for partly with French taxpayers' money.

However, the Commission has taken the view that the sales system represented an abuse of a dominant position and discriminated between EU

national - both offences under European law.

A meeting between the CFC and the European competition commissioner, Karel Van Miert, failed to find a resolution, although the commission is still hopeful the CFC will make last-minute proposals. The commission has warned that if a solution is not found it will initiate formal proceedings against France which could culminate with a fine of well over 10 per cent of World Cup revenue.

How Premiership teams play the 14-man game

Eleven men against eleven? Not any more. Ever since Keith Peacock came on as the first Football League substitute for Charlton against Bolton in 1965, the role of the replacement has been a crucial part in any team's planning.

Yet there is a great difference in the way different managers handle their substitutes. For example, in the Premiership this season Sheffield Wednesday, Tottenham, Southampton and Barnsley have used their full complement of 14 players in at least half their games. Contrast this with Coventry's Gordon Strachan, who has used all three of his substitutes only twice.

Andy Liddell (pictured) is the player most used to having a bit-part role. He has made 23 Premiership appearances for Barnsley this season but has completed 90 minutes on only three occasions.

He has been substituted 10 times and has come on as substitute 10 times. Last week he surpassed himself by coming on in the first half against Southampton and then making way for another substitute in the second half.

Only Sheffield Wednesday use more substitutes than Barnsley. Wednesday have used exactly twice as

many substitutes as West Ham, who are the club least likely to change their line-up during a game.

Southampton's Matt Le Tissier, who has been substituted 13 times this season, is the player most likely not to finish a game, while Chelsea's Tore Andre Flo, with 15 appearances, is the most used substitute.

Wimbledon's Andy Clarke has the distinction of being the most used substitute in Premiership football history, having come off the bench a remarkable 68 times. Manchester United's Brian McClair, with 54, is the only other Premiership player to have chalked up a half century of Premiership substitute appearances.

Statistics: Brian Sears

The 14-man game

How Premiership clubs use substitutes

Club	Games	Number of subs	Average subs/game	Times all three subs used
Sheff Wed	30	74	2.47	17
Barnsley	29	70	2.41	15
Tottenham	30	72	2.40	16
Southampton	30	71	2.37	15
Aston Villa	29	61	2.10	10
Derby	29	63	2.17	12
Everton	30	65	2.17	12
Crystal Palace	30	63	2.10	11
Leeds	29	58	2.00	7
Man Utd	31	62	2.00	12
Blackburn	29	59	1.97	9
Blackburn	29	57	1.97	8
Wimbledon	29	50	1.72	7
Liverpool	30	49	1.63	6
Newcastle	29	45	1.55	4
Coventry	29	42	1.45	2
Bolton	29	41	1.41	3
Leeds	30	42	1.40	5
Aston Villa	31	42	1.35	4
West Ham	29	37	1.28	3

Super subs

The most used substitutes

Andy Clarke (Wimbledon)	68
Brian McClair (Man Utd)	54
Graham Fenton (Leicester)	44
...and season by season	
1992-93 Stuart Barlow (Everton)	18
1993-94 Stuart Barlow (Everton)	18
1994-95 Alex Mathie (Newcastle)	16
1995-96 Gordon Watson (Sheff Wed)	18
1996-97 Jon Goodman (Wimbledon)	18
Paul Simpson (Derby)	19

Changing faces

Number of players used by Premiership teams this season

Everton	33	Derby	26
Crystal Palace	32	Manchester United	26
Sheff Wednesday	31	Newcastle	26
Southampton	29	Bolton	25
Tottenham	28	Liverpool	24
West Ham	27	Wimbledon	24
Arsenal	26	Blackburn	23
Barnsley	26	Leicester	22
Chelsea	26	Aston Villa	21
Coventry	26	Leeds	21

Bit-part roles

The men who regularly play less than 90 minutes

Club	Most used substitutes	Most substituted players	Club	Most used substitutes	Most substituted players	Club	Most used substitutes	Most substituted players
Arsenal	Pitt 13	Parlor 11	Crystal Palace	Shipperley 6	Dyer 11	Liverpool	Berger 14	Riedle 7
Blackburn	Wright 10	Wright 6	Derby	Frederick 6	Dyer 11	Man Utd	McClair 9	Scholas 10
Barnsley	Hicks 10	Liddell 10	Everton	Hunt 10	Oster 11	Newcastle	Kotschal 10	Tomasson 6
Blackburn	Boyle 10	Riley 11	Leeds	Oster 11	Uiley 10	Sheff Wed	Collins 11	Pembroke 10
Bolton	Boyle 10	Boyle 10	Leicester	Fenton 10	Fenton 10	Southampton	Williams 11	Le Tissier 13
Chelsea	No 15	Patrascu 10	Leeds	Fenton 10	Fenton 10	Tottenham	Dominguez 9	Glavin 7
Coventry	No 15	Boyle 10	Leeds	Fenton 10	Fenton 10	West Ham	Potts 7	Barokovic 7
Derby	No 15	Boyle 10	Leeds	Fenton 10	Fenton 10	Wimbledon	Clarke 11	Gayle 11

Police on alert as Iranians take to the road in France

Iran

IRAN this week became the first of the World Cup finalists to arrive in France for a tour of the country which will host the tournament.

The Iranians have embarked on a three-match tour against opponents from the French First Division. The aim is to help the players become used to playing in France; results are of secondary importance.

The first game of their trip, on Tuesday, resulted in a 1-0 loss to Guingamp. "The defence stayed back too much," Tomislav Ivic, Iran's Croatian coach, who was once in charge of Paris St-Germain, said. "You can't win if you don't take risks. But these players have talent and we still have three months in which to improve." The Iranians were due to play Nantes last night and finish with a match in Montpellier on Tuesday.

The presence of the Iranians has also provided some useful practice in surveillance measures for the crack French police force RAID (Research, Assistance, Intervention, Dissuasion). "For us it's a chance to bang around and test our mechanisms before the finals," their commander, Loic Janot, said.

Hungary

GIORGIO CHINAGLIA, the former Italian international centre-forward who began his playing career with Swansea City, is the figurehead of a £10m bid by an American company to buy the Budapest club, Ferencvaros.

Chinaglia, who went on to play for Lazio and New York Cosmos, will become the president of the club if the bid by Diocese International Associates is successful. The offer in-



FOOTBALL
AROUND
THE
WORLD
BY RUPERT
METCALF

cludes a commitment to spend at least £6m on players to help Ferencvaros qualify for the Champions' League.

The Hungarian club have also received investment proposals from both the Canadian-based International Management Group and from the British-based English National Investment Compa-

ny, which also has controlling interests in Slavia Prague, AEK Athens and the Italian club, Vicenza.

The removal of Slavia and AEK from the Cup-Winners' Cup on Thursday means that Uefa, European football's ruling body, has avoided what would have been a very tricky problem. If the Czech and Greek sides had won their quarter-final ties, every semi-finalist apart from Chelsea would have been controlled by the same company.

United States

LAST weekend's opening fixture of the new Major League Soccer season was an uncomfortable experience for Jaime Moreno, the Bolivian international forward who has had two spells with Middlesbrough.

Moreno, who plays for Washington DC United and was the league's top scorer last year, was sent off after just 28 minutes of the encounter with Miami Fusion for a retaliatory foul on the Miami defender Cle Kooizman.

Moreno should have known better than to tangle with Kooizman. After the rugged US international centre-half had committed his first offence in the opening seconds of the game, the commentator employed by the television network ESPN gleefully announced: "Kooizman has committed more fouls than any other player in Major League Soccer history!"

Despite being short-staffed for over an hour, a Washington side including John Harkes and Roy Wegerle gained a 2-0 win over Miami, who are in their first MLS season and fielded the Colombian playmaker Carlos Valderrama.

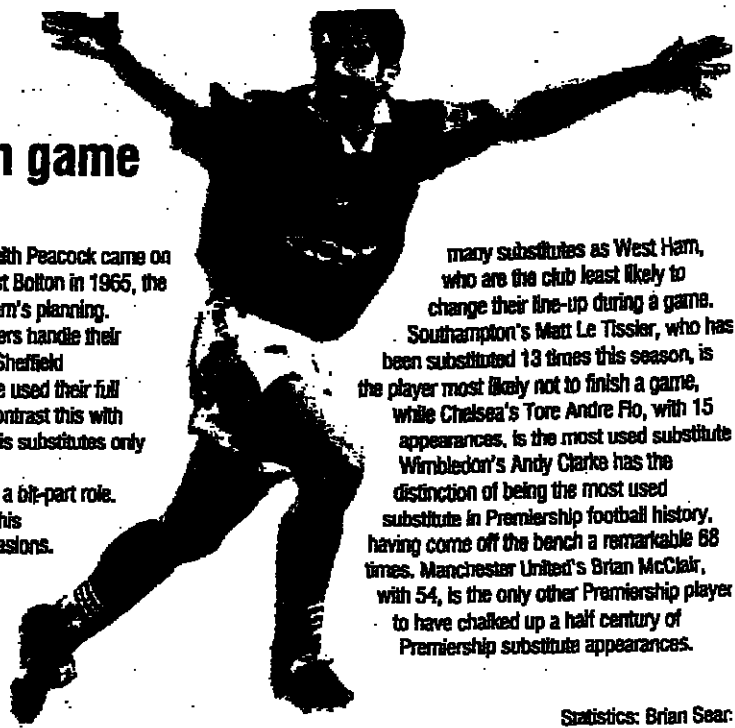
Miami could not afford to play in the city's famous Orange Bowl stadium, so they stage their home games at Lockhart stadium in nearby Fort Lauderdale. They entertain the league's other newcomers, Chicago Fire, there tonight.

Vietnam

IN the sporting arena, if not elsewhere, the Vietnamese police do not exactly have an unblemished reputation.

The newspaper *Ngaoi Lao Dong* reported yesterday that the football federation in Hanoi is seeking to suspend five coaches following allegations of match-fixing in last year's national championship. No fewer than three are from police teams, Hanoi, Haiphong and Ho Chi Minh City. The federation is also seeking a lifetime ban on the captains of the Hanoi police team and the Ho Chi Minh City Customs side.

Media reports have said at least 74 managers and players were involved in fixing matches in the 1997 season. All but one of the 12 teams in the league were implicated.



Major weekend fixtures and pools check

3.0 unless stated

TODAY

Nationwide League

First Division

- 1 Birmingham v Nottm Forest
- 2 Bury v Oxford Utd
- 3 Crewe v Charlton
- 4 Ipswich v Wolves
- 5 Man City v Sheffield Utd
- 6 Reading v Huddersfield
- 7 Stoke City v QPR
- 8 Walsley v Portsmouth
- 9 Swindon v Stockport
- 10 Tranmere v Bradford
- 11 West Brom v Port Vale

Second Division

- 12 Blackpool v Gillingham
- 13 Brentford v Northampton
- 14 Bristol Rovers v Preston
- 15 Chesterfield v Carlisle
- 16 Luton v Grimsby
- 17 Millwall v Burnley
- 18 Oxford v Watford
- 19 Plymouth v Bristol City
- 20 Southend v Bournemouth
- 21 Walsley v Wigan
- 22 Wrexham v Wycombe
- 23 York v Fulham

Third Division

- 24 Brighton v Cambridge
- 25 Doncaster v Lincoln
- 26 Hull v Cardiff
- 27 Leyton Orient v Darlington
- 28 Macclesfield v Shrewsbury
- 29 Notts County v Exeter
- 30 Northampton v Colchester
- 31 Peterborough v Chester
- 32 Rochdale v Hartlepool
- 33 Southport v Rotherham
- 34 Swanssea v Scarborough
- 35 Torquay v Barnet

Bell's Scottish League

First Division

- 36 Aberdeen v Celtic
- 37 Dundee Utd v Hearts
- 38 Hibernian v Motherwell
- 39 Kilmarnock v Dunfermline
- 40 Rangers v St Johnstone
- 41 Airdrie v Stirling Albion
- 42 Hamilton v Dundee (2)
- 43 Morton v Partick
- 44 Raith v Ayr
- 45 St Mirren v Falkirk

Second Division

- 46 Brechin v Clyde
- 47 Inverness CT v Queen of Sh
- 48 Livingston v East Fife
- 49 Stirling Albion v Clydebank
- 50 Stranraer v Forfar

Third Division


- 51 Alloa v Albion Rovers
- 52 Berwick v Ross County
- 53 Cowdenbeath v Queen's Park
- 54 Dumfries v Ayr
- 55 Montrose v East Stirling

TOMORROW

Nationwide League

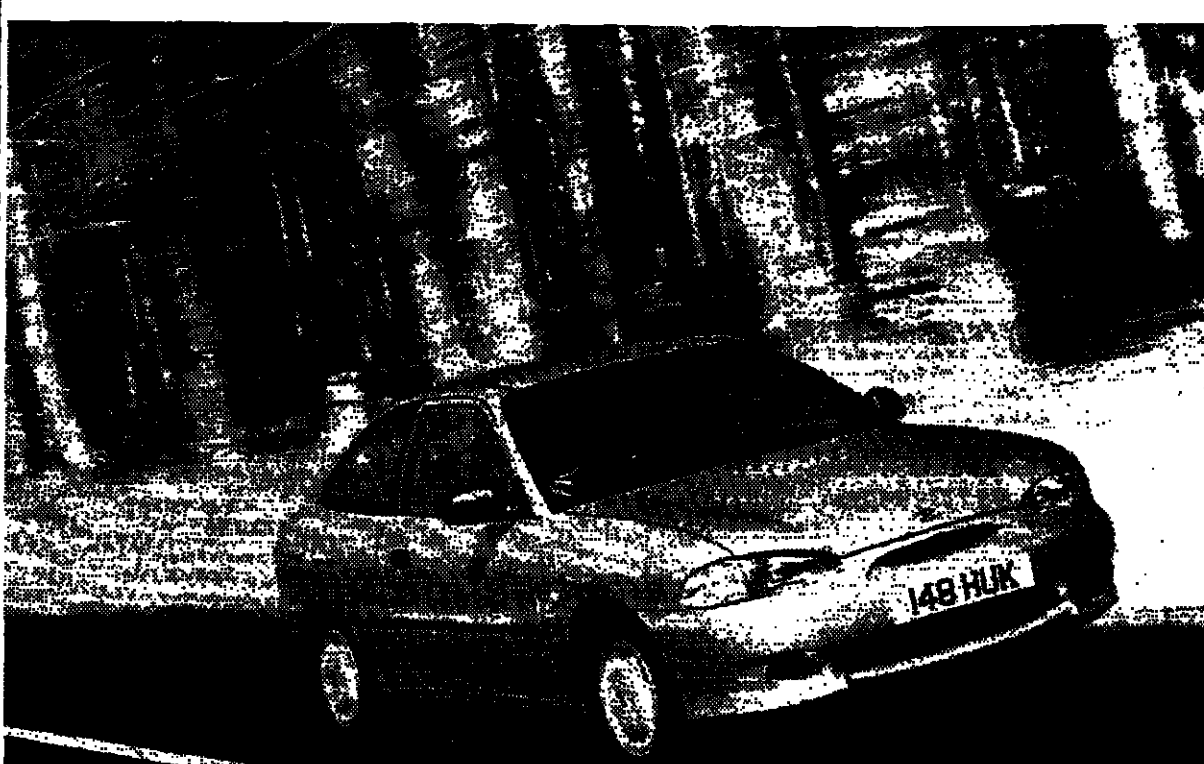
First Division

- 56 Middlesbrough v Norwich (1)



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Coaching overhaul means end of era

Glenn Moore
goes back to the
classroom where a
revolution in English
football is taking place

IT WAS long ago, Bobby Moore was still playing for England and the Bay City Rollers singing for Scotland. I had just turned 10 and was about to play on a full-sized football pitch for the first time.

It is not an experience you forget, the pitch seemed vast but Mr Hawkins, who "coached" the school football team, knew how to stop us running after the ball in a pack. "Your dad was a right-back, so you play there. Stay on that side and don't cross the half-way line."

That memory came back this week as the English Schools FA lamented the end of an era. The victory over Brazil last Saturday was the last Wembley international to be run by the blazers and mortar boards. Now the professionals, led by Howard Wilkinson, the FA's Technical Director, will be in charge of youth development.

The change is part of a revolution in English coaching as outlined in Wilkinson's Charter for Quality. Among the most significant measures is a belated overhaul of the coaching system to ensure well-meaning amateurs will not be replaced by unsuitable professionals.

Two years ago I took the FA Preliminary Coaching Badge, the lower tier qualification. A 30-hour course spent entirely on the training pitch—apart from a basic examination on the laws of the game—it was interesting and instructive but fundamentally flawed. There was no mention of nutrition, physiology, sports medicine, injuries, warm-ups or warm-downs. Those who passed were unleashed on players with no further supervision and no requirement to keep their knowledge up to date.

The course was at least 25 years old and it showed. Glenn Hoddle had not bothered doing it, or the full badge, the upper qualification, nor had many other managers from past to Premiership.

Last month I took the Prelim's replacement, the FA coaching certificate. Costing £90 it was designed in accordance with UEFA guidelines and in conjunction with the Professional Footballers' Association and Loughborough University. It was launched amid fanfare by the likes of Alex Ferguson and Steve Heighway last autumn, but would it be any better?

Early indications were not promising. At around 9am one Monday just over 30 of us wandered into the University of London's playing fields near Wimbledon and were asked to squeeze into a classroom



Glenn Moore, the Independent's football correspondent, holds forth during his course for the FA coaching certificate at Wimbledon last month

Photograph: David Ashdown

reminiscent of Tom Brown's school-days. There was a blackboard but not enough desks. We gazed wistfully at the pitches outside. A dated Charles Hughes coaching book was passed around. This was the new, singing-and-dancing "modern" course?

It was. For the next 75 minutes we talked about preparation: how to set up a session, the equipment required, aspects of health and safety, warming-up, cooling-down. It was mostly common sense—making sure you had contact numbers for players' next-of-kin and knew where a phone was, checking for things like broken glass that might cause injury—but it needed to be known.

The classroom work, done by in groups and general debate, not lectures, also broke the ice before we headed for the pitches. We were aged 20-45 but mainly in our 30s, all male except Michelle, a teacher, and included students of West Indian,

middle-eastern and Asian descent. I had been worried about the difficulty of fitting the course around work—it was the week Frank Clark was sacked and Gianluca Vialli held his first press conference—but my concerns were put in perspective by Stuart. A member of the RAF, he was on standby to go to the Gulf—several close colleagues were already there.

There were other military personnel, several teachers (it was half-term), a hairdresser, a sports masseur, a surveyor, a shipping importer and recently graduated students.

Motives varied. Two already coached professionally, at Fulham and Watford, but wanted to expand their knowledge and gain the formal qualification. Stuart, who was coming out of the RAF, was one of several who wanted to work in America at summer camps. Des and Andy, a father and son, intended to open a football school. Imad, the masseur, wanted an-

other string to his bow when working with clubs. "Badger" had been asked to coach his nephew's team and felt he ought to do it properly.

He was not alone. One encouraging aspect for Wilkinson's reform was the number of students who coached local youth or boys' teams and wanted to be better qualified. "It used to be rare," said Mark, who ran an under-12 side, "but now most junior team managers have qualifications."

Most courses are at weekends, this was Monday to Friday, 9.30 till about 4.30, 50 hours in total, plus an evening studying the laws and another doing first aid. The Surrey FA had already held one such course and suffered a considerable drop-out. The bold response was to run two courses alongside each other, one taken by county coach Keith Boanas, the other by Kenny Bremner, who was on Fulham's youth coaching

staff. Both had been decent non-league players.

The paperwork went on to include attitudes and ethics, physiology, overseas injuries, how to spot and guard against child abuse, nutrition, and further advice on the mechanics of coaching. The Hughes book was used for its training routine, his "direct-play" (old-style Wimbledon) philosophy was not mentioned.

The practical aspect is largely unchanged but there was a greater emphasis on coaching up to coach. We were alternately taught a technique or aspect of the game—such as turning with the ball, or winning the ball back in a small-sided game—then asked to demonstrate how we would coach it. Playing abilities varied, a couple of players struggled to cope, at the other end of the scale a few topped up their regular wages playing non-League on Saturdays.

On the old course you were

judged at the end of the practical on your three topics. Now you go away and do 16 hours recorded coaching, half with adults, half with kids, then come back to be assessed on two further topics. Only then can you pass.

Our reassessment is in May but one problem is doing the coaching. It is a sensible idea but not everyone has access to teams and this is a major reason why people do not come back to complete the course. One student said he had arranged, beforehand, to work with a top Ryman League team but now that he realised how difficult it was he no longer fancied the idea.

Those who pass—and failures can be reassessed without having to do the whole course again—can go on to do the Coaching Licence, and the Advanced Coaching Licence. These two are equivalent to UEFA awards and without the latter you cannot coach the likes of Juventus or Ajax. They are among the very few pan-

European qualifications in any area of employment and, in time, will be required to coach in the Premiership.

None of my group will reach such heights but all appeared to enjoy and benefit from the week. The course is a significant advance and most coaching professionals support it. It is also very hard work and there were a lot of tired limbs by Friday night.

However Dave Bromley, Surrey's coaching secretary, noted: "The people who do it are the converted, the ones prepared to make a commitment in time and money. The ones who need the course, the parents who stand on the touchline and shout 'don't take it'. As Barrie Williams, the former Sutton United manager who beat Coventry in the FA Cup, used to say, there are three things every bloke thinks he knows all about, how to drive, how to make love and how to play football."

As Meatloaf said, two out of three ain't bad.

Vase candidates seek respect and a happy day at Wembley

THE prospect of being 90 minutes (plus a replay and penalty shoot-out, if the quarter-finals are any benchmark) from Wembley is doubtless preoccupying fans in Wolverhampton, half of Sheffield, north London (N5) and, to a lesser degree, in Newcastle (where they have less suburban matters on their minds).

But it has become nothing short of an obsession down in the West Country, and especially in the Potteries town of Kidsgrove and in tiny Tow Law in County Durham, a town put on the map by Chris Waddle, who famously combined skinning sausages with skinning defenders while playing for the Northern League club before swapping their black and white stripes for a more famous variety.

After all, Arsenal (12 visits), Newcastle (11), Wolves (8) and Sheffield United (6) all know what the inside of Wembley looks like, whereas Taunton Town, Tiverton Town, Kidsgrove Athletic and Tow Law Town, who contest the second legs of their FA Carlsberg Vase semi-finals this afternoon, have just two visits to the Twin Towers between them: Tiverton contested the Vase final in 1993, Taunton the following year.

The Tow Law secretary Bernard Fairbairn, whose association with the club goes back 37 years, admits: "We're trying to keep our feet on the ground, but of course we're excited. Tow Law's population is only around 2,000, but we're expecting a crowd of 1,000-plus for this game."

Apparently, they are "confident, but not over-confident" of winning their second leg against Taunton after returning from the West Country with a 4-4 draw. Obviously for Taunton, three of Tow Law's defenders were on the mark. "We'll be looking for our forwards to do something this time," admits Fairbairn.

Taunton, however, boast 31-goal striker Mark Cutler (who scored a brace in the first leg), the best record of any side in the competition (a 78.26 per cent success rate) and, according to press reports, they fancy themselves a bit away from home, too.

But Taunton's biggest spur is probably the 2-0 advantage Tiverton hold from their first leg against Kids-grove. Taunton and Tiverton are currently battling it out at the top of the Screwfix Direct Western League—Taunton have led for the best part of the season but Tiverton, with two games in hand, have caught up—and are also on course to meet in the semi-finals of their League Cup.

The prospect of these arch rivals meeting in the Vase final is a mouth-watering one, at least

for West Country football fans. As the Taunton chairman Tom Harris admits: "It would be a real fillip for the West Country were both teams to reach Wembley. There were 14,500 there when we lost to Diss Town, and they're from East Anglia. Heaven knows how many would turn up for a local derby."

But Tiverton have still to overcome Kidsgrove who, like Manchester United, appear to have peaked too early this season: favourites to win North-Side West Counties League Division One, they have slipped up in recent weeks. However, the FA Vase is no different to any other cup competition in that league form counts for nothing, and the Tiverton manager, Martyn Rogers, who described the first leg as a "hard-fought, close encounter in which we took our chances and they didn't take theirs" expects a similar tussle in the second leg.

"Even though we lost in 1993 it was one of the best days in this club's history," says Rogers. "This time we want to go to Wembley and win."

Not to mention, of course, pick up the £14,100 cheque Carlsberg will present to the winners, a huge carrot for non-League clubs of this size. The players, too, are on win

bonuses, although not big ones. Because, according to Tony Williams, editor of non-League magazine *Team Talk*: "Most of the players at this level view their football as a glorified hobby. They are local lads who have good jobs and choose not to play professionally. They are essentially big fish in a little pool, and they like it like that."

That is not to say that it does not infuriate Williams that football at this level "doesn't get the respect it deserves. Many of these clubs get better crowds than Scottish Second and Third Divisions clubs (Taunton had 1,569 against Tow Law, while Tiverton had 1,885 against Kidsgrove) but still get little or no press coverage."

Yet the interest is undeniably there: evidence of that comes in the form of the hugely popular non-League equivalent to *Rothmans*, the *Non-League Directory*, which has featured in the sports best-seller lists since its launch 20 years ago.

Its biggest fan is the astrologer and television presenter Russell Grant, a passionate fan of Hillingdon Borough of the Spartan South Midlands League, who have never won the Vase in its 24-year history (it replaced the Amateur Cup in 1974). Grant will inevitably be at Wembley on 9 May for the final, but he will not be consulting planetary aspects to predict the winner. The only stars that will have a bearing on the outcome of that game will be those on the pitch.

Tyneside's royals will be quickly forgotten

TYNESIDE will begin the new millennium with something of its own constitutional crisis. The Halls, the royal family Newcastle never thought they needed but whose patriarch assumed monarchical status through a knack for identifying and then regenerating key pastimes on various neglected soils on the banks of the Tyne, now have the problem of having no credible successor to the throne of their Wyndard estate.

Douglas Hall, the disgraced Prince and heir to everything he can see from his bedroom window (and probably all he can see from the window of whoever's bedroom he just so happens to be in), was never likely to be held in the same esteem as his father, but it now seems he will never assume the same unofficial title. After last weekend's headlines, he has apparently gone into hiding.

Freddie Shepherd, his best mate, can never hope to maintain such a low profile, his larger-than-life presence—symbolised by the giant sign

which advertises his scrap metal business—will surely always be apparent to the citizens of Newcastle.

Freddie has always been considered one of us. Having stood on the terraces, he has the only essential quality required for a credible board member. As a result he has endured the same torment that we all shared for so long. Having witnessed the same misery and sorrow, he could be forgiven for the occasional desire for light relief, as I'm sure Mrs Shepherd will agree.

Perhaps Douglas and Freddie do deserve our compassion and understanding. In what has been a very dull season, they made an admirable attempt to resurrect the excitement of the Keegan era and its "cavalier" approach. With a simple mission—let your opponent score as often as they like, as long as you score more—they have ap-

parently travelled the world giving it their best shot. And let's face it, they had more success in Europe with the "you can have four if I get five" approach than Newcastle ever did.

And, after all, a boardroom trying to buy success is not a new thing. This is not the first time our club's upper hierarchy has paid out a lot of money for a few clapped out old donkeys who put in a few mediocre performances, stroke it around a bit and show a couple of good touches, only to get on the wrong end of a good thrashing. But at least they used to let me watch.

However calls to sack The Board have come far too late, as apparently the girls of Marbella's brothels have already sacked them many times.

So even if we do find it hard to accept the derisory

comments that allegedly came from a member of the region's most regal family, I suspect the Geordie tradition of the next millennium will realise they never really wanted a monarchy anyway, and Douglas will be quickly forgotten.

Then we will relish the opening of Wyndard Hall to the public, the ride on the monorail to the grand houses of the estate where men in period costume will perform authentic scenes of life in the Shearer and Keegan households, and to the gift-shop, and the opportunity to buy portrait-adorned Doullton and tea-towels—each one hand-made in Asia for less than a fiver.

And I look forward to saying to my sons as we drive further up the A1 for the Vauxhall Conference derby clash with Gateshead, "and that, bonny lad, is the ironically titled Angel of the North—a giant public monument made out of rusting scrap metal, erected at the end of the last century to commemorate the time that Freddie Shepherd was strung up by the lasses."



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON THE NON-LEAGUE TUSSELE TO REACH THE TWIN TOWERS

they didn't take theirs" expects a similar tussle in the second leg. "Even though we lost in 1993 it was one of the best days in this club's history," says Rogers. "This time we want to go to Wembley and win."

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FAN'S EYE VIEW NO 246 NEWCASTLE UNITED BY KEVIN BAYLISS

TYNESIDE will begin the new millennium with something of its own constitutional crisis. The Halls, the royal family Newcastle never thought they needed but whose patriarch assumed monarchical status through a knack for identifying and then regenerating key pastimes on various neglected soils on the banks of the Tyne, now have the problem of having no credible successor to the throne of their Wyndard estate.

FAIR PLAY LEAGUE

Rank	Team	Points	Goals	Yellow	Red
1	G. Poll	17	7	68	103
2	G. Willard	16	4	74	94
3	M. Reed	14	2	63	73
4	G. Barber	13	3	61	78
5	J. Winter	15	2	59	69
6	D. Ellery	17	4	58	78
7	P. Durkin	15	3	58	71
8	S. Dunn	12	2	43	53
9	U. Rennie	18	1	59	64
10	A. Wilson	17	2	64	64
11	M. Riley	16	2	48	58
12	P. Jones	17	2	52	62
13	N. Barry	14	1	48	48
14	K. Borge	14	2	38	48
15	P. Alcock	16	1	48	54
16	G. Ashby	16	2	42	32
17	D. Gallagher	15	2	38	48
18	S. Lodge	18	2	46	56
19	M. Bodenham	18	0	48	48

UNFAIR PLAY LEAGUE

Rank	Team	Points	Goals	Yellow	Red
1	Everton	30	5	80	85
2	Coventry	29	5	54	78
3	Chelsea	30	3	61	78
4	Bolton	29	4	53	73
5	Leeds	30	3	60	75
6	Derby	30	1	62	70
7	C. Palace	31	2	60	70
8	Blackburn	29	3	48	63
9	Sheff Wed	30	3	48	64
10	Southampton	30	3	47	62
11	West Ham	30	3	48	61
12	Newcastle	29	2	48	58
13	Man Utd	31	0	51	51
14	Wimbledon	30	1	42	47
15	Liverpool	30	1	41	46
16	Tottenham	30	1	41	46
17	Barnsley	29	0	44	44
18	Leicester	29	1	37	42
19	20 A Villa	31	1	37	42

LEADING SCORERS

Rank	Player	Goals	Yellow	Red
1	Cole (Man Utd)	12	5	0
2	Harrison (W Ham)	12	3	0
3	Sutton (Blackburn)	16	2	1
4	Dubin (Coventry)	14	4	1
5	Owen (Liverpool)	14	0	4
6	Bergkamp (Arsenal)	12	3	2
7	Gallagher (Bilton)	13	3	1
8	Vialli (Chelsea)	9	2	0
9	Fiorito (Barnsley)	13	2	0
10	(12 for Sheffield Utd)	13	4	2
11	Wanchope (Derby)	11	0	4
12	Jarman (C Palace)	11	0	3
13	(12 for Carlisle)	11	0	2
14	Di Carlo (Sheff W)	11	0	2
15	Wallace (Leeds)	10	1	2
16	Flo (Chelsea)	9	0	2

I'm still top dog at Sludgethorpe and not eating humble paella



THE GAFFER TAPES

WHAT an escape: saved by a prawn. I still can't believe how lucky I was. There I sat, in the Marbella Club with Freddie and Doug, having an early evening beer or two and chatting to a couple of businessmen we'd met about the Toot, when I suddenly felt this terrible tightening of the stomach.

"Oh Jeez, my guts are killing me," I said to Freddie. "I think I'm going to have to bail out. I must have had a dodgy prawn in that paella."

"Nway the lad," said Doug. "It's gonna be a top night on the tap. We'll get one of the girls to give you a massage in all the right places, that'll cure you."

"Sorry boys, have one for me, I've not got a moment to lose," I said as I left my drink and legged it for the loo.

Franco's revenge has long gone but when I opened my *News of the Screws* last week I felt that tightening of the stomach again. But for that wonderful rotten prawn that would have been me plastered across the front page. Not that I'd have been rude or daft enough to call Sludgethorpe girls "dogs": they are all top lassies.

It goes to show how careful you've got to be though. You can't trust anyone in this game. Next time I go overseas on a trip like that I'm going to get a disguise and invent a cover story.

I'll everyone I'm a Tory MP, that sounds credible enough.

Talking of politics, the budget wasn't too bad. I thought I'd get hammered but there's no soak-the-rich tax rate for mega-earners like me and I might even get a discount on my car tax. The Fens' only two-seater so that must qualify as a small car.

I was a bit disappointed he didn't put the price of Scotch up. I wouldn't have bothered buying six crates of it if I thought it would stay the same rate. At least the 120 cartons of ciggies represent a bit of a saving even if I still don't have anywhere to put them. It's a good job we haven't a game today, I can keep

them in the dressing-room for another week.

Meanwhile, it looks like Boro are going to pinch Gazza from me. We kissed and made up last week but he thinks Sludgethorpe is too far from his local working men's club. I'm sure he'll do a good job for my old mate Robbo. He's just the Mike to put a curb on Gazza's retelling habits but I had to laugh when, early in the week, he said rumours that Gazza might go to Boro were "just newspaper talk". A day later he's made a bid.

They must have a communication problem up there. I remember when Emerson signed, the chief executive is-

sued a statement slaughtering the papers saying something along the lines that the stories were scurrilous rubbish and categorically denying he or anyone else at the club had ever had any contact with any bloke called Emerson ever, not even listening to an Emerson, Lake & Palmer LP. An hour later he called a press conference to announce the signing.

Now I'd never mislead the press like that. All a reporter needs to do if he wants the truth out of me is give me a call. If his paper is bugging me 80 grand a year for a series of exclusives I'll tell him, if not I'm in a meeting.

Back to the Gazza deal and

to show I'm not jealous I even backed a horse called Robbo at Cheltenham on Thursday. So did Fergie but he didn't take kindly to my suggestion that he go for a place double with The French Furze. He wouldn't even drink French wine. Perhaps he's still upset about their nuclear tests in the Pacific.

Cheltenham's a great social occasion. There's more football managers there than you'll ever find on a coaching course. There's also plenty of players and you get a right laugh watching them trying to keep out of sight of their respective managers. I'm sure I saw Shaun Prone there myself but he swears he really did have to

miss training to visit a sick aunt. It was also a good warm-up for this weekend as we've come over to Ireland since there's no match. The chairman and I thought the lads deserved a bit of a break and we figured Dublin was perfect. The fights are cheap and the locals speak the same lingo so the lads shouldn't get into any trouble. Ivor Niggie had to miss out as he's scared of flying and Shaun Prone's apparently caught equine flu off his aunt but the rest are here having a quiet, relaxing time.

Hang on. Oh, got to go, the hotel manager's at the door. And is that a police siren outside - or an ambulance?

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Back to the wall: Paul Weaver, the commercial manager who now helps pick the Rovers team. 'I understand the supporters,' he says. 'They have no one to blame and I'm the only target.'

Photograph: Simon Willkinson

Ugly scenes as last rites played out at Belle Vue

IN OTHER circumstances it might almost be funny. A team that cannot win? A club managed by a man who admits to knowing little about professional football? In Doncaster the plight of the Rovers is anything but amusing - go there and you see a soap opera that is tearing a town apart.

To find a reason why Doncaster are bottom of the Third Division and seemingly heading for disintegration, you need only ask anyone in the South Yorkshire town. The fans blame the principal share owners, the man running the club attacks the local council, the town hall looks back to the club's administration; the buck passes with a dizzying, and sickening, speed.

What no one disputes is that Doncaster Rovers will not be a member of the Football League after this season. Their record reads like an accident report: three wins in 38 matches, 97 goals conceded. Add a crumbling ground and a club in hock to its creditors and you soon forget any inclination to find the situation funny. For a lover of football the situation at Belle Vue is a reason to cry.

The club has only nine professionals, the rest of the laughably named squad being made up of YTS boys. The coaches were laid off last week to save money; the team is being managed by a man whose previous experience at a League club was running Stockport County's lottery; the club is run from scruffy temporary buildings planted on a bomb site that is designated a car park.

"No disrespect to Beirut," Mark Weaver said, pointing to the cratered surface, "but it's like it was there 20 years ago. Look at that and you know you've got problems. The place is a mess."

Weaver is a pivotal figure in the shambles that is Doncaster. Rovers. Listen to him and he is the hero who is keeping the club

afloat. Speak to the supporters and he is the front man of the majority shareholder, Ken Richardson, who is awaiting trial on charges related to an arson attack on the main stand in 1995.

Even the supporters accept Weaver is a plausible talker, however, and you leave a meeting with him hoping he is the man of reason trying to sift through the chaos. Brought in originally as commercial manager, he now picks the team with the only coach on the books, Danny Bergara, the former Stockport manager.

"We'd like to do a sympathetic piece about Doncaster," I had said to him on the phone. "No," he replied, "it'll be an honest job," he replied, "You might as well be honest." That is the battle-worn voice of resignation.

Hatchet. In another person that might be said lightly but Weaver has had death threats. Pictures have been sent to his

home we'd shut down because I couldn't afford to put the picture on."

Weaver's argument is one of broken promises from a local council which itself has been the subject of Labour Party inquiry. A new ground was mooted, he says, a prospect that has not materialised. Nothing was spent on Belle Vue, which is leased from the council, because Doncaster were expecting to move and now financial reality insists that wages of £28,000 per week have been pared to £7,000. The consequences ought to be noted because they could be repeated the length and breadth of the lower divisions.

The make or break point, as far as Weaver is concerned, was a fixture against Fulham two

years ago. Both teams were vying for promotion, it was a big match, but the crowd was just 2,300. "They had their chance," Weaver said, "but they wouldn't support us."

That's about 1,800 of our own fans which would bring in around £6,500, so in one week Ken Richardson has lost £22,000 in a week just for the sake of watching his team win. How long can a man do that for? I turned round to him and told him: "You're an idiot. When it fails they'll smack you anyway." Now my ambition is to ensure we fulfil our league fixtures this season.

They will do that. Only eight matches remain, but they will be played with players plucked from non-League football. After that who knows? According to supporters' groups the GM Vauxhall Conference is at the optimistic end of their expectations.

"We're in death throes," Charles Walker, the chairman

of the supporters club for 20 years, said, "and slowly being starved of all sustenance. Crowds are down to around 700. In reality people have been driven away. There cannot be a hundred season ticket holders left. We are accelerating into oblivion with Ken Richardson's and Mark Weaver's feet hard down on the pedals."

Save The Rovers Group held a public meeting on Thursday night but the impasse remains over Belle Vue, a piece of desirable real estate just across from the town's famous racecourse. Get planning consent for a new ground and the old stadium could be sold to finance a modern one. "If we had planning permission I could get on the phone and sell the club 50 times over," Weaver said. "Without it and it's worth about £1."

So Rovers play on to a chorus of dissent, suspicions running wild on all sides. There might be bona fide buyers but

negotiations seem to break down as often as the team loses. The whole sorry saga has people trapped in a box of distrust.

"If I ran off I'd never live with myself and I don't believe I should because I've done nothing wrong," Weaver said. "It's not the fans, I feel sorry for them, it's those on the council who I won't let beat me. They're hiding behind Richardson's name. The worst thing that could happen to them is if Richardson sold the club - then they'd have to do something."

Walker and the supporters, meanwhile, labour under no misconceptions. "You sometimes feel it's not worth the effort," he said, "but I'm no longer fighting just for Doncaster. I'm doing this for every other supporter whose club might end up in the same situation."

Brighton, Doncaster, where next?

City's chance to be united as they start life without Lee

LATE in Peter Swales' reign as chairman, Manchester City finished two successive seasons with the Premiership table showing they were the fifth best team in England. Today, as City begin life after Francis Lee with what Joe Royle calls "a massive game" against Sheffield United, they are only the fifth best side in Greater Manchester.

Royle, who will be in charge of the First Division's bottom club if City lose while Reading and Stoke win, hopes that Lee's act of "falling on his sword" may create a belated unity of purpose. But the fans' favourite, Georgi

Kinkladze, will be absent against the FA Cup semi-finalists.

Kinkladze has played only twice under the new manager, on the day he was appointed and in the defeat at Port Vale a week ago today. In the wake of speculation that he was to join Ajax, the Georgian was sent home from training yesterday because of illness.

"He has been running a raging temperature for two days, but he is also upset about his and the club's position," Royle said. "Francis was his mentor so he's been upset about things generally. His performance last week reflected that."

Jamie Pollock makes his debut for City following a £1m move from Bolton. Royle never quite lived down a tongue-in-cheek reference to his "dogs of war" at Everton, but the combative Pollock will be expected to bring bite and bark to City's midfield.

"We haven't asserted ourselves at home," Royle said, an understatement given that only one other club in the four divisions, Doncaster, are into double figures for home defeats. "But we've got four matches here, and I sense that the lads are keen to put it right."

"The events of this week may

help us. Francis obviously felt that by leaving he'd take some of the pressure off the players. I'm not saying that certain people have got what they wanted, but there was a faction giving him a hard time and that influenced his decision. I hope we see a unified Maine Road."

Despite Lee's exit, the directors' box will come under scrutiny as supporters of both clubs try to see whether Mike McDonald attends as expected.

The Nationwide League takes centre stage this weekend. Phil Shaw assesses the action

Queen's Park Rangers today. Both clubs changed managers in mid-season without the desired effect. Chris Kamara, having lost the Bradford City job after a bad run, has now presided over 12 matches without a win at Stoke, who have a solitary victory to show for the last 23 games.

Ray Harford's defection from West Ham to west London has proved doubly unfortunate. QPR have tumbled into trouble, while his previous club have fallen off the pace in the play-off zone. The presence in the visitors' attack of Mike Sheron, a "Judas" figure to Stoke fans af-

ter his lucrative move last summer, may take some of the heat off a beleaguered board.

It promises to be a weekend for the Nationwide League to show the Premiership that spectator interest is not confined to a self-styled elite. Today's biggest crowd, possibly more than 40,000, will be at Sunderland for the visit of Portsmouth. Middlesbrough, even without Paul Gascoigne, will be close to 30,000 again for tomorrow's match against Norwich, as will Manchester City.

While the north-eastern duo should record victories, the

leaders, Nottingham Forest, may be harder pressed before an anticipated 25,000 gathering at Birmingham. The side managed by the man whose goal once made Forest champions of Europe have lost only twice in 19 games. Birmingham, indeed, now look the West Midlands' best bet for a play-off place.

The first championship of the season looks set to go to Nottingham, but not to Forest. Notts County, the definitive yo-yo club of the 90s, are on course for 100 points in the Third Division and should add to their tally at home to Colchester.

Red Rose wary of Scottish surprises

By Chris Hewett
Rugby Union Correspondent

ENGLAND'S pampered professionals have grown well accustomed to Sabbath rugby over the last couple of seasons but, if they think they can enjoy a lie-in with the papers, sink a couple of quiet ones before lunch, stuff themselves full of roast beef and still score 40 points at Murrayfield tomorrow afternoon, they will be in for a rude awakening. As far as the Scots are concerned, Mothering Sunday is as good a day as any to syring the mother of all surprises.

On paper, Lawrence Dallaglio's men have only to turn up; bigger and meaner in the tight five, more dynamic in the back row and significantly quicker and more clinical out wide, there is barely a chink in the armour - at least, not a

chink sufficiently wide to give the under-powered underdogs a glimmer of hope.

Leaving aside Gregor Townsend and his fly-by-night unpredictability for a second, who among the Scots would stand a snowball in hell's chance of making the England starting line-up?

At which point, English minds invariably drift back to that humiliating afternoon in 1990: the day of David Sole's slow walk into history, Tony Stanger's famous try, Will Carling's terminal indecision, Brian Moore's fatal attack of wild-eyed hubris. Only Sole, a decade ahead of his time as a loose-head prop, would have gained a foothold in that particular Red Rose vintage, but the paper differential did not stop his countrymen playing like men possessed.

Hence the edginess apparent

among Dallaglio's squad this week. If it is eight years since England last lost to their longest-standing rugby foe, it is six years since they crossed the Scottish line at Murrayfield. "It wasn't a problem in my day," pointed out Clive Woodward, the England coach. "I seem to remember us running in five there in 1980." A joke, yes, but a restless, anxious sort of joke all the same.

Woodward's unease is well founded, for if ever there were two coaches equipped to sneak a crucial advantage in the tactical mindgame, they can be located in the opposing dressing-room tomorrow. Ian McGeechan has plotted more public downfalls than Max Clifford - he was responsible for the Murrayfield ambush in 1990, he out-thought the Wallabies in 1989 and he made gorilla-sized monkeys out of the Springboks

SCOTLAND v ENGLAND			
at Murrayfield			
D Lee	London Scottish	15 M Perry	Bath
A Stanger	Hawick	M A Healey	Leicester
G Townsend	Northampton	S W Grierwood	Leicester
A Tait	Newcastle	J J Gaiscott	Bath
S Longstaff	Durham HSFP	A Adebayo	Bath
C Chalmers	Newcastle	P Grayson	Northampton
G Armstrong	Newcastle	M Dawson	Northampton
D Hilton	Bath	J Leonard	Leicester
G Bullock	West of Scotland	R Cooke	Leicester
P Burnell	Leicester	D Garforth	Leicester
D Croonin	Warrington	G Archer	Newcastle
G Weir	Newcastle	L Dallaglio	Warrington
R Wainwright	Durham HSFP	N Back	Leicester
A Rodenburg	Leicester	D Ryan	Newcastle
E Peters	Bath		
Replacements: 16 M Gilchrist (Glasgow), 17 C Henry (Hawick), 18 A Milne (Bath), 19 A Pennington (Northampton), 20 S Gilmour (Warrington), 21 P Wright (Warrington), 22 G Miller (Glasgow)			
Referee: C Thomas (Wales)			
Kick-off: 3pm, tomorrow (BBC1)			

management during last summer's Lions tour - and while his current international role is purely advisory in nature, that

land's gloriously mordant chief coach was his usual side-splitting self yesterday as he reminded his charges of their responsibilities, telling them they were "well paid professionals" and that they could "expect to be pilloried for any failure to perform".

It was Telfer's achievement in South Africa last summer to frighten a lightweight but extremely mobile set of tight forwards into fearless, streetwise world-beaters and, if he can work the old magic on the likes of Gordon Bullock, Paul Burnell and Damian Cronin tomorrow, we will have quite a game on our hands.

Certainly, it was the potency of the McGeechan-Telfer axis that exercised the mind of the England captain yesterday. "When we talk about the threat Scotland pose, we have to start at the top," Dallaglio

said. "That means their coaches. McGeechan is one of the most eminent tacticians in the world game and I speak from Lions experience when I say that Telfer will ensure that the Scottish pack is totally motivated. He did it for us in South Africa and he'll do it for them, no question."

"I acknowledge the fact that we are favourites for this match and we need to be comfortable with that status if we are serious about seeking constant improvement, even on the 60-point display against the Welsh in our last match. But we have to assume that the Scots will be in their tackling mode and it's also worth bearing in mind that five of their side played in 1990. They'll draw sustenance from that."

Two of that quintet, Gary Armstrong and Craig Chalmers, fill the influential half-back po-

sitions tomorrow and with the excellent Alan Tait certain to play an assured "seen it, done it" hand in the centre and Derrick Lee contributing extra pace from full-back, everything is in place for a masterful, string-pulling, top-of-the-bill performance from Townsend.

The man is touched with a rare footballing genius and, if he clicks with those around him, there is not a defence on earth capable of holding him for the full 80 minutes.

He can do nothing without the ball, though, and England's defensive strategy will be based squarely on the muscular ball retention exemplified by Dallaglio, Martin Johnson and Garath Archer. The Scots cannot match them in that area and, possession being nine tenths of rugby law, they must fear another afternoon of intense frustration.

England's rock Johnson ready to roll again

Having flagged against the French, he was awesome against the Welsh. Will, asks Chris Hewett, Martin Johnson now hammer the Scots?

ANOTHER weekend, another almighty rumble amid the mud and bullets of professional rugby's front line. Martin Johnson has seen it, confronted it and suffered the physical consequences of sorting it rather too often of late - 40-odd games plus a Lions tour last season, another 36 or so this - and while he would continue to cut a formidable figure were he to sink to his knees in exhaustion, it is beginning to dawn on the England hierarchy that one of their prize assets is suffering from an advanced dose of the diminishing returns.

It has been an in-and-out sort of season by Johnson's stratospheric standards, his occasional flights of majesty separated by unusually long stretches of anonymity. There is barely a coach alive who would not give him pride of place on his team sheet - John Hart would make an All Black of him tomorrow - but the days of a second row hitting his peak at 30 are long gone. England's kingpin lock turned 28 earlier this month and unless appearances are very deceptive, he is beginning to feel his age.

Yet Johnson will not give an inch; if his battered body is screaming messages at him, those messages are falling on deaf ears. "I've never asked to be left out of any rugby team I've ever played for and you can take it from me that I don't intend to start now," he mutters, his almost inaudible bass tone spiked with an iron determination to finish the job, to see it through to the end. "If I'm selected to play, I play. Simple as that. I've missed only one Premiership match for Leicester this season and I think that's fair enough. It's important to keep yourself as fresh as possible, obviously, but it's the same for everyone these days. Pro game, and all that."

As if to reinforce his deeply-held belief that the only person qualified to cast judgement on a player's general well-being is the player himself, Johnson proceeds to challenge the common assumption that he will pass up the opportunity to tour with his country this summer. "I did read an article to that effect, but since I'm not even close to making a decision, I fail to see how anyone can tell me what it's likely to be. It's between Clive Woodward and myself and we'll discuss it at the end of the Five Nations. As I've said, there's not much point in being a rugby player if you don't want to play rugby."

Unfortunately for the Scots, notoriously challenged in the beef and brawn

department, Johnson particularly wants to play in Edinburgh tomorrow afternoon. "It's about time we turned on a show at Murrayfield because whenever we play there, we struggle to hit top gear. I've been there twice, '94 and '96, and I've yet to see us score a try. On the first occasion we threw away God knows how many chances and ended up winning with a last-minute penalty. And the second? Well, that was Dean Richards' game, wasn't it?" He smiles at the memory of his club-mate's epic contribution that day. "One way or another, Deano saw a fair bit of the ball. Why the hell did the Scots keep kicking it to him?"

But which Johnson will the Scots encounter? The flat, one-paced performer of Paris six weeks ago or the fierce, fired-up and implacably hostile enforcer of Twickenham two weeks later? From cattle class to world class in the space of a fortnight. How does he explain that little discrepancy?

'I've never been asked to be left out of any rugby team I've ever played for and, you can take it from me, I don't intend to start now'

"It all comes down to attitude and I don't think many of the England team brought the right attitude to the French game. We let ourselves down pretty seriously that day; we considered ourselves a good side because we'd drawn with the All Blacks last time out and we assumed they were a poor side because they'd been slaughtered by the Springboks. We didn't address things in the right manner and as a result, we didn't give ourselves an earthly."

"The strange thing about France was that we were all absolutely convinced we'd got the preparation right; I'm one of the more experienced members of the side and I don't think it dawned on me that there might be something wrong until a few minutes before kick-off. I detected a little something about the atmosphere in the dressing-room that

made me uneasy and when the French scored two tries in the first 20, I realised we'd got it badly wrong."

"We soaked up some stick for that performance and rightly so. It helped us focus more strongly on the Welsh, though, and while they too went ahead early, we were in a far better frame of mind to work it out. There was no panic. After their second try, the forwards got together and said: 'Look, if we concentrate on the basics and stop giving them the bloody ball, they won't be able to live with us.' They didn't live with us, either."

Since when, of course, all hell has broken loose on rugby's ever-vibrant political scene. The Northampton lockman of Woodward's Bisham Abbey ultimatum, the English Clubs' Charter, Fran Cotton's "Vision". Johnson shakes his head mournfully at the very mention of the latest committee room shenanigans and you get the impression that he would rather play 80 games a season, all of them against New Zealand and South Africa, than take tea with Cliff Brittle and Sir John Hall.

"The only positive aspect of the last three weeks or so is that it has brought the England squad closer together. Big off-field ructions tend to have that effect - those who were involved at the time remember how Will Carling's sacking by the Rugby Football Union gave us a feeling of great solidarity - and if we can take that togetherness on to the field, all well and good."

"We're a close-knit party anyway and Clive can take a lot of credit for that. I'm not saying we weren't close under Geoff Cooke or Jack Rowell but in the professionalism environment, the whole atmosphere has changed almost beyond recognition. Clive is full-time, of course, and he's in a much better position to make things happen, but he's also young enough to speak the players' language, to occupy the same wavelength. That's very important, it seems to me. We know exactly where we stand with him."

If a frowning, beetle-browed Johnson shunts Damian Cronin, his opposing front jumper, out of the road at the first line-out tomorrow, wraps two great hairy fists around the ball and lays it on a silver salver for Matthew Dawson to distribute as he thinks fit, Scotland will know exactly where they stand, too. They will be somewhere between a rock and a very hard place and the view will be distinctly unpleasant.



Looking for a lift: Martin Johnson will be hoping England's beef and brawn are in fine form at Murrayfield Photograph: Reuters

Coach Gatland warns against rare case of Irish optimism

By David Hughes
in Dublin

IRELAND expects, and all that, and therein lies the rub. Maintaining a national tradition of veering from extreme pessimism to unbridled optimism, victory over Wales is confidently expected at Lansdowne Road this afternoon after the unexpectedly strong showing in Paris. The degree to which this optimism spreads to the home dressing-room may well determine the outcome.

It may sound clichéd, but there's an element of truth in the old adage that Irish teams are happiest when underdogs. Indeed, perhaps the Lansdowne Road crowd are as well, when

one compares the frenzied atmosphere for the visit of the All Blacks to the somnolent air for the game against the Scotland. After the latter encounter, the team was pilloried. Now, they're everybody's favourite team again hereabouts. Yes, fear was one of the main sources of motivation against a French side halfway towards a second successive Grand Slam. With the best will in the world, this Welsh team does not strike that same fear into anybody.

Identifying and ensuring the correct mental approach is one of the prime tasks facing Warren Gatland, the pragmatic Kiwi coach, who has brought Ireland back to basics after the more utopian ideals of Brian Ashton.

"I heard a couple of players' comments that they didn't consider the Welsh to be a big threat, and that was kicked into touch straightaway. I have reminded them that all internationalists are difficult and that any side are going to be tough opposition."

Gatland has demonstrated an acute understanding of the Irish psyche and has shown himself to be an expert motivator both with Connaught and now with Ireland.

Aside from instilling more self-belief, he has also brought the team back to basics. "One-nil would do," he says. Hence, something similar to the more structured game plan which applied against France seems

likely. Ireland's strength is in their pack, where the set pieces have been excellent all season, and once again Connor McGuinness and Eric Elwood can be expected to test the Welsh in the air early and often, while also kicking for the corners.

By contrast, Welsh prowess rests in their back-line, even if Scott Gibbs' big hits and ability to bounce off props may be missed. Accordingly, Robert Howley has been extolling a more expansive game plan.

"We want to go out against Ireland and play the traditional handling game Welsh rugby is famous for," he said. "There was a lot of pressure before the Scotland game and, although we won, the performance level

didn't match our expectations. Unlike at Wembley, I am sure we can score tries to beat Ireland."

None the less, the last time Wales beat Ireland, it was Neil Jenkins' boot which steered them to a 17-15 victory in Dublin four years ago.

Kevin Bowring, the Wales coach, is under no illusions about the task facing his side.

"We are fully aware of the commitment, the passion, the intensity, that they will throw at us, especially early on in the game," he said.

"When you play against the Irish they sometimes seem to have a few more than 15 on the field, and it is usually chaos and mayhem for that opening period."

"We know it will be a very

physical challenge. They will really come at us, buoyed up by their performance against France and also disappointed that they haven't registered a win in the Five Nations yet."

Home advantage has been negligible in this fixture, with only two home wins in the last 14 years. Against that, Ireland have won the last four meetings including a World Cup win in South Africa three years ago, and will be going for a record fourth successive Five Nations win over the Welsh.

About the safest prediction to make is that this is a classically 50-50 Celtic confrontation, and the biggest surprise will be if there's more than a score in it at the end.

IRELAND v WALES			
at Lansdowne Road			
C Clarke	Tenure College	15 K Morgan	Portyrridd
R Whelan	Saracens	W Proctor	Lincoln
R Henderson	Warrington	A Bateman	Richmond
K Hogg	Bristol	L Davies	Cardiff
D Hickey	St Mary's	G Thomas	Cardiff
E Elwood	Cardiff	N Jenkins	Portyrridd
C McGuinness	St Mary's	R Howley	Cardiff, capt
R Corrigan	Carmarthen	A Lewis	Cardiff
K Wood	Harlequins	G Jenkins	Swansea
P Wallace	Saracens	D Young	Cardiff
P Jones	Saracens	M Voyle	Llanelli
M O'Kelly	London Irish	A Moore	Swansea
D Corkery	Bristol	R Appleyard	Swansea
A Ward	Ballyshannon	K Jones	Ebbw Vale
V Costello	St Mary's	C Charlvis	Swansea
Replacements (from): 16 P McCall (Ireland), 17 D Humphreys (Ireland), 18 O'Leary (Cardiff), 19 P Cullen (Cardiff), 20 S Ryan (Cardiff), 21 L Hogg (Cardiff), 22 J Humphreys (Cardiff)			
Referee: E Morrison (Eng)			
Kick-off: 3.0 (BBC1)			



YOUR MONEY

Personal finance and property

Saturday 21 March 1998

Budget bonanza for savers

The Chancellor has paved the way for investors and providers to keep their savings safe from the taxman.

Nic Cicutti reports

There is nothing quite as pleasurable – and astonishing – as watching a minister admit to a large audience that his Government got it wrong all along.

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, performed this trick in his Budget speech in the Commons on Tuesday. The moment came when he announced that the Treasury was backtracking from plans to punish PEP investors by capping at £50,000 the amount they could transfer into new-style Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs).

Indeed, the Chancellor went further. All funds invested in PEPs between 1987 and April 1999 will be allowed to stay as they are and will continue to enjoy their existing tax-free status. This means that up to £82,000 so far sheltered in PEPs, plus any gains in the course of the past 10 years, will remain out of the hands of the Inland Revenue.

As for ISAs, although there will be a £5,000 annual limit, the proposed £50,000 lifetime cap on investments into them has also been lifted. Perhaps worried at potential suggestions of a total climbdown, the Chancellor said the £5,000 annual limit will stay in place for 10 years, with a "review" after seven years.

As if that were not enough, Mr Brown also amended his department's original plan, so that in the first year up to £7,000 can be invested in an ISA, of which up to £3,000 may be in cash. This is likely to increase the likelihood of lower wage-earners being prepared to save money.

As one upper-class "expert",

who preferred to remain anonymous, explains: "Joe Shpack is hardly likely to stash his lolly in an ISA if it means dealing in weird things like shares. But give him the nearest thing to an instant access building society account and he might take it up. Who knows, he might even get the investment bug." Research from the United States suggests that many small investors start with cash plans and move into equities later.

The improvements to the original ISA proposals extend to allowing investors to choose different managers for their cash, equity investments and insurance products, instead of being forced to find one ISA provider.

Not surprisingly, the financial services industry is fulsome in its praise for the Chancellor. "The fact that [he] has ring-fenced existing PEP savings is good news for the 3.2 million people who, according to our research, use PEPs to fund retirement or repay a mortgage," says Templeton's marketing manager, Jim Sharp.

Richard Branson, airline tycoon and chairman of Virgin Direct, a telephone PEP provider, praises the Government for having "kept its promise" to listen to PEP providers.

The outpourings of congratulations were no doubt totally unconnected with the fact that PEP providers now expect a last-minute rush in sales. By 5 April, according to Royal & Sun Alliance, up to £770m may flood into PEPs from individuals who held off because of the uncertainty over their future.

In the next 12 months to April 1999, many billions more are likely to be placed in both PEPs and their less sexy partners, Texas, as investors make use of their tax-saving benefits.

As it happens, the advice from many experts is to do precisely that. Amanda Davidson, a partner at London-based financial advisers Holden Meehan, says: "Saving is important for everyone and if there is a chance to lock up some capital gains and avoid income tax on an investment for an indefinite period, it makes sense to take it."



Indeed, Keith Luckhoo, sales manager at Royal & Sun Alliance Unit Trusts, argues that PEPs and ISAs may become an even more essential part of tax planning now that changes to capital gains tax (CGT) rules are set to come in.

The changes mean that indexation relief – allowing a element of inflation to be added when calculating gains that may be liable to CGT – will be scrapped. CGT will be tapered, starting at 40 per cent in the first year and reducing to 24 per cent (13.8 per cent for lower-rate taxpayers) after 10 years.

Shares bought and sold in a unit or investment trust PEP and future ISA are not deemed to be "crystallised" for CGT purposes, making collective investments more tax-advantageous than buying individual shares.

All in all, the Iron Chancellor's about-turn is positive news for all savers. As always, wealthier savers will do far better than the rest. But at least Mr Brown has abandoned the Treasury's spurious argument that penalising mildly better-off savers by taking some of their tax benefits away would somehow benefit the lower-paid. That was never true and Labour's recognition of the fact is a step forward.

For more details on PEPs, see our survey on pages 7 to 10.

Relief for homeowners as Miras wins a reprieve – but stamp duty goes up instead

Housing experts expressed surprise and mortgage lenders gave huge sighs of relief this week, as the Government revealed that a widely-expected further cut in home loan tax relief would not be imposed after all.

True, the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, did take another bite out of more affluent buyers, by increasing stamp duty on property purchases from 1.5 per cent on the entire amount of purchases over £250,000. Duty on property purchases over £500,000 will rise from 2 to 3 per cent.

On the mortgage interest relief (Miras) front, lenders said they were delighted at the no-change decision, which leaves relief in place at 10 per cent from 5 April, down from 15 per cent in the present tax year. Most experts had predicted a further cut to 5 per cent in April 1999, if not its outright abolition. Each 5 per cent reduction adds £10 a month to the cost of home loans over £30,000.

Chris French, chief executive at Kensington Mortgage Company, a home loan

broker, says: "Were delighted the Chancellor has made no change to Miras and no significant changes to stamp duty. The housing market is still reasonably fragile and with the threat of higher interest rates still strong, it is important that the cost of borrowing is not increased significantly."

In fact, had Mr Brown lived up to the market's widespread expectations, most analysts believe it would have had relatively little effect on house prices. Claran Barr, chief UK economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said earlier this week that his company predicts a rise in property prices of about 8 per cent this year.

Indeed, some building societies, including Skipton, are arguing that the £3bn annual cost of Miras is mis-directed. They would have been relatively happy to have seen it scrapped altogether, as long as significant resources were used to help more vulnerable groups, including first-time buyers.

Mr Brown's measure on stamp duty

is expected to yield £390m in the coming tax year, rising to £520m 2000/01. Of that, 25 per cent will come from some 30,000 transactions in the residential property market. That, however, depends on how house prices proceed in the next few years, particularly in London and the South-east.

As with the earlier stamp duty hike in July, the Chancellor offered scant opportunities to buyers hoping to squeeze their purchases through before the revenue-raising measures come into force. They will apply to all purchases taking place on or after next Tuesday, except for those made where an exchange of contract had already taken place before last Tuesday.

In other ways, the Chancellor may have prolonged the agony of homebuyers. The City's reaction to the Budget was to drive up trading against other foreign currencies. This in turn increases the potential for a further increase in interest rates.

– Nic Cicutti

Bad news in the Red Book for travellers

Not all of the Chancellor's U-turns this week meant good news for punters. Apart from the by-now obligatory sting performed on fags and booze, travellers will be forced to pay a far higher rate of Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) on the cover they buy when they go abroad.

The higher rates follow a decision by Gordon Brown to back away from the previous Government's decision to levy a higher amount of Insurance Premium Tax (IPT) on travel cover sold through estate agents than other outlets.

The Chancellor's move means an earlier system of dual pricing, whereby estate agents were forced to charge IPT at 17.5 per cent on cover they sold while other insurers could levy just 4 per cent on their policies, will be scrapped. Instead, every outlet will have to charge 17.5 per cent.

The increase could mean that typical annual travel cover for a family with two children will rise by about £10 to £13.

The British Insurance & Investment Brokers Association (Biiba), the brokers'

trade body, warns that Mr Brown's decision is bad news for travellers.

The Conservatives' original decision to tax travel agents at a higher rate came after mounting evidence that many were selling expensive insurance as a condition of the supposedly cheap travel deals.

The Department of Trade and Industry is set to ban this practice, while attempts to circumvent the tax by offering "free" cover as part of a travel package will incur IPT at the same 17.5 per cent rate.

However, Mike Williams, chief executive at Biiba, points out: "The Chancellor's move represents a U-turn. This demonstrates that the Government has succumbed to strong lobbying by the travel industry at the expense of the public." The measure is expected to raise just £20m a year for the Government by the year 2000.

The cost to individuals who fail to take out cover because it seemed too expensive, and then find an accident or theft leaves them facing hardship, is not yet known.

– Nic Cicutti



ISA lottery bites the dust

Of all the proposals for the new Individual Savings Account to have bitten the dust, one in particular will be the most mourned. It was that of offering a monthly prize draw worth a magnificent £1,000 to all new ISA savers. The Treasury's post-Budget document simply says it was "decided not to proceed with the idea". The fate of the civil servant who dreamt that one up is not known.

Superwoman vs Virgin

Say what you like about Nicola Horlick, but she puts her money where her mouth is. She has accepted Virgin Direct's challenge to beat the FTSE All Share index by at least 2 percentage points a year for the next three years or pay £6,000 to charity. In turn, she is challenging Virgin's tracker fund to outperform the index in each of the next three years or forfeit the same amount to charity.

Bombshells for tenants

Terrorism insurance is something one never thinks they need – until it's too late. But as more and more homebuyers colonise former office buildings in city centres, any resumption in an IRA bombing campaign could hit them where it hurts: in their wallets.

Page 6

Animal crackers

Collecting animal-shaped and other jokey jewellery is nothing new. Victorians were keen wearers of similar items more than 100 years ago, as a forthcoming auction will show. Except their wasn't cheap paste: be prepared to see prices reach £6,000 or more for individual solid gold and jewelled cats and dogs.

Page 3

Anoraks to the rescue

Calling all Britpop fans: First Direct, the telephone bank, is launching an Anorak Amnesty, in which wearers are being asked to hand over their old anoraks and such to Shelter shops so they can be re-sold to the public to raise money for homeless people. The amnesty, jointly undertaken with Shelter, is being kicked off with a £17,000 donation by First Direct. Liam Gallagher is said to be keen to donate one of his anoraks – after he's finished punching in a fan's face, of course.

Following the Budget the tax regime of PEPs will change and the benefit to you will be reduced from 6.4.99. The price of investments and the income from them can go down as well as up, you may not get back as much as you invest. The value to you of the benefits will depend on your own circumstances. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. M&G do not offer investment advice or make any recommendations regarding investments – we only promote the packaged products and services of the M&G marketing group. You should contact your independent financial adviser (if you have one) before investing. (Source: Macropol UK Financial Services to 30.1.98)

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PERSONAL FINANCE JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Adding more PEP to the new ISAs

Let's not beat about the bush: for many hundreds of thousands of savers, this week's Budget will have brought huge sighs of relief.

By scrapping the Government's proposals to set a lifetime limit of £50,000 that can be placed into its new Individual Savings Account, the Chancellor has either shown he is prepared to listen, or that he is prone to caving in when under pressure.

I prefer to think of it as a willingness to compromise and a genuine commitment to consultation. After all, the Treasury's plans, unveiled by an ill-advised Postmaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, before Christmas, were in need of major revision.

Mr Robinson suggested that no more than £50,000 of existing PEPs would have to be placed into the new ISA and enjoy its tax-free benefits. The same limit applied to all future savings in an ISA.

As was pointed out in *The Independent*, this had nothing to do with encouraging people to save more. It reflected the need to restrict the cost of existing tax-free savings schemes, on which up to £1.5bn a year is lost by the Inland Revenue.

We argued that if the Treasury were serious about promoting the savings habit among the low-paid, it would allow for a greater proportion of cash to be transferred into new ISAs when they came into being in April 1999. It is good to see the Treasury acting on this advice: the first-year limit on cash paid into ISAs will now be £3,000 instead of £1,000.

One consequence of the Government's amendment to the original ISA proposals is

that it makes PEPs more attractive, for a further 12 months anyway, than they were prior to the Budget. Any PEP savings between now and April 1999 will continue to roll up free of income and capital gains taxes "in perpetuity". So if you have a pound or two to tuck away, it makes even more sense to do it now.

A cheer too for the tapering off of capital gains (CGT) liabilities on investments over 10 years, from 40 per cent to 24 per cent, for higher-rate taxpayers, and to 13.8 per cent for people on basic tax rates. This may make little difference to most small savers, whose CGT bills are not likely to be that great. But it does send a clear signal that investments are there to be held for the long-term if their full benefits are to be realised.

After a few weeks' lay-off, caused by a minor medical problem, I am grateful to my colleague Andrew Verity for his sterling work in editing this section.

Andrew, who also curates the Financial Makeover, normally on this page, tells me that there are vacancies for brave (or foolhardy) individuals who would like to receive several hundreds of pounds-worth of free financial advice - in return for being featured.

If you are interested, write quickly to Andrew Verity, Financial Makeover, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5DL. (This week's makeover has been held over to make space for Budget news.)

Apologies too (again) for the motoring page disappearing into the Time Out section: we hope to resume normal service soon.

The Budget post-mortem

By David Harrison

Chancellors of the Exchequer are prone to make heady claims about the likely place in history of any reforms they announce in their Budget speeches. Gordon Brown is no exception.

Early in his speech, Mr Brown claimed he was about to deliver his promised fundamental reform of capital gains tax (CGT). In fact, it was not quite as earth-shattering as he implied. Many of the complex provisions and reliefs, which make it such a difficult tax to compute and which result in such a low yield to the Treasury, apparently survive. Nevertheless, the changes are radical enough and, needless to say, there will some winners but also some losers.

Young entrepreneurs will be pleased by Gordon Brown's change to retirement relief - business people no longer need to wait until they are 50 to attract retirement relief as it is to be phased out over five years. The replacement tapering relief on business assets is geared solely to length of ownership (over 10 years), reflecting the modern trend for businesses to start up with a specific intention to float or achieve a trade sale in the medium-term. It will, however, disappoint short-term speculators.

On the other hand, he has made it more difficult to avoid any charge on the disposal of an asset just by becoming "non-resident". Until now, if you became "non-resident" for a period of three years, during which time the asset was sold, there would be no tax to pay. Brown has extended this period of non-residence to five years.

However, for those tempted to live abroad permanently after retirement, there is no mention of an exit charge on all relevant assets upon emigration as was feared, so they can still realise assets tax free.

The popular "bed-and-breakfasting" exercise, usually undertaken to "wash out" capital gains each year within the annually exempt amount, or



Quick getaway: drivers' worst fears from the Budget failed to materialise

to create some losses on under-performing shares, has been blocked. This caught us all napping and no doubt stockbrokers will regret the loss of commission.

"Business Angels" - those individuals willing to provide risk capital for businesses - can breathe a sigh of relief. The Chancellor has retained investment relief, which was designed to create a source of funds from individuals for investment in shares in qualifying companies. On disposal of any asset, the gain can be reinvested, deferring the tax charge until the newly acquired shares are, in turn, disposed of. Even better, if these shares are retained until death, all latent capital gains liabilities are exempted.

Additionally, investors in the enterprise investment scheme (EIS) will be in a better position from 6 April

1998. Originally, an investor could not defer a capital gain realised from other assets by investing in shares under the EIS scheme. This was relaxed in November 1994, with the proviso that the investor obtained income tax relief for his investment. From 6 April 1998 the Chancellor has removed this requirement and an investor will be able to claim deferral of a capital gain on the amounts subscribed under the EIS scheme, whether or not he qualifies for the income tax relief.

One of the biggest surprises was that inheritance tax was scarcely mentioned and, in the main, lifetime planning is unaffected by the Budget. Another £8,000, bringing the total to £223,000, can be passed to the next generation tax free.

The biggest cheer of the speech was reserved for the Chancellor's announce-

ment on offshore trusts. He had, of course, already felt compelled to block one avoidance scheme several days before the Budget. Comment on this, however, has so far been confused and often inaccurate. Brown has blocked the importation of an offshore trust into the UK laden with unrealised losses where the plan was to realise the losses and sell on to those seeking shelter from gains tax.

He further proposes to extend a tougher tax regime, first introduced in 1991, to the pre-1991 settlements which were previously protected. However, since the measure takes effect on 6 April 1999, offshore trusts can re-organise, for example, by excluding as their beneficiaries the settlor, members of his family or companies which they control - thereby reducing their liabilities.

UK resident beneficiaries of offshore

trusts, whether created by settlors who are UK resident and domiciled or not, will need to seek professional advice as to the tax consequences for them of any capital sums or benefits being made available to them by the trustees of offshore trusts, after 17 March 1998.

Company car drivers expected the worst and while some will undoubtedly suffer, many are no doubt quite relieved by the final outcome as swingeing charges on company car parking spaces and other horrors did not materialise.

Anyone provided with private fuel by their employers will suffer, for the next five years, punitive incremental increases in the scale benefit on which income tax is charged. Remember that the charge applies even if only £1 of fuel is supplied. It is therefore only worth taking the fuel if the quantity supplied is more than the tax charge.

In an environmental move, the Chancellor has decreed that the car benefit itself (which is based upon a percentage of the value of the car when new, plus any accessories added) will be unaffected if it is modified, at additional expense, to run on cleaner road fuel gases. Similarly, cars acquired which already do so will have the extra cost disregarded.

The annual thrash up and down the motorway prior to each 5 April, to do enough specific business miles in order to reduce the tax charge, may become a thing of the past. Currently, the charge is reduced incrementally if business miles reach an annual total of 7,500 or 18,000 which, of course, positively encourages business travel - hence the far-flung business trips organised in March!

Gordon Brown is now proposing to change the emphasis to achieving fewer miles by reducing discounts, the higher the business miles undertaken. Specific proposals will emerge in due course.

David Harrison is national director of tax at Kidoson Impey, chartered accountants and business advisers (0171-334 4778).

Spotlight: The Independent Mortgage Collection's capped rate mortgage

The Product: The Independent Mortgage Collection's capped rate mortgage.

The Deal: Take a loan worth up to 95 per cent of the value of a new house. Over the next four years, borrowers will pay no more than 6.75 per cent interest. If rates fall, homeowners pay less.

Plus points: Borrowers have flocked

recently to fixed-rate mortgages which guarantee a rate of interest for the next two years or more. Over the last year, interest on five-year fixed-rate mortgages (usually between 6.5 and 8 per cent) has been lower than variable rates (between 8 and 9 per cent).

But many experts believe interest rates will come down in the next five years to 6 per cent or less. The

mortgage is funded by Bradford & Bingley, which in the last year has offered variable interest rates substantially lower than most lenders.

Although not as keen as Leeds & Holbeck's 6.49 per cent five-year capped offer, no compulsory insurance - which usually adds at least 0.3 per cent to a loan - is required.

Drawbacks and risks: If you believe

interest rates will go up and stay up, a fixed-rate product is a better bet.

There is a redemption charge of 3.5 per cent in the first four years - roughly equal to six months' repayments. But this is better than other capped-rate mortgages, where borrowers must wait longer than the capped-rate lasts. There is an application fee of £295 which can be added

to the loan. Bradford & Bingley also charges mortgage indemnity guarantees (MIGs) starting at 75 per cent of a loan-to-value. On a £100,000 loan, a 90 per cent MIG would cost £750.

Verdict: A reasonably priced way to hedge against the bad times but not miss out on the good.

Marks out of five: Three

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صلى الله عليه وسلم



ROBIN AMLOT
INTERNET
INVESTOR

A Treasury of Budget information

Gordon Brown's first full Budget will have left many people slightly bemused about what is and what is not actually going to happen next month at the start of the new tax year. He has slipped into the habit of "pre-announcing" measures.

Many of the tax changes unveiled last Tuesday will not come into effect until April next year. If you want to know not only what the Chancellor said but what sums the Government's been doing and using to back up his plans, it is worth checking out the Treasury web site.

Not only will you find a verbatim transcript of the Budget Speech, you can download copies of the Budget Red Book *New Ambitions for Britain* and other documents, including *Innovating for the future: Investing in R&D and The Code for Fiscal Stability*.

In addition, you can download copies of the press releases which accompany the Budget. This is the fat file of paper which journalists, accountants and city analysts burn the midnight oil over on Budget day and for several days thereafter. It is usually these documents into which the Treasury slips a few little Budget booby traps for the unwary taxpayer.

If this all sounds too turgid you could settle for downloading or merely ordering your own copy of the *Pocket Budget*, which contains the Government's description of the Budget measures.

The site also allows the democratically inclined to check on previous Budgets and related legislation. You can look back not only at the summer 1997 mini-Budget, Gordon Brown's first, but also at Ken Clarke's Budgets.

However, the burning question is: are you better or worse off as a result? You can check what kind of tax bill you are likely to face under the Budget proposals with Moneyworld's on-line personal tax calculator. Developed in conjunction with accountants

Price Waterhouse, it is designed for the UK tax system and assumes you are a UK resident. The calculator allows you to work out your approximate tax bill. Before you panic about entering personal details on to the web, Moneyworld and Price Waterhouse do not ask for your name or address and promise not to record, use or pass on any of the information you input.

The calculator can take account of whether you are employed or self-employed. It includes provision for dividends and savings account interest, the rent-a-room scheme, personal allowances, etc.

Price Waterhouse also has a detailed Budget Report on-line. The firm's planned merger partner, Coopers & Lybrand, also offers a comprehensive site, as does Deloitte & Touche - full marks to the latter for being fastest out of the starting gate to register "budget98" as a website address.

And a final thought this week on the subject of internet addresses. The Institute of Trade Mark Managers has issued a warning about organisations selling domain names with the suffix ".tm" instead of better known suffixes such as ".com" or ".co.uk".

Domain names are the addresses which identify computers linked to the internet. This ".tm" does not mean "trade mark". As a business you should not fall into this con and, as an individual, you should be wary of any well-known company name with this suffix - all it actually means is that the website in question is identifying itself as being on a computer located in Turkmenistan!

Treasury: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk
Moneyworld Tax Calculator: www.moneyworld.co.uk/budget98
Price Waterhouse: www.pw.com
Coopers & Lybrand: www.uk.coopers.com
Deloitte & Touche: www.budget98.com

Watch out for costly imitations

Collect to invest: Forget tasteful tiaras. The really rich go for the kitsch. By John Windsor

Naff, naff, naff! Little bunnies, dicky-birds and pussy cats. Would you be seen wearing any of this sentimental jewellery? Would any woman?

Do not scoff. If you turn up your nose, the joke could be on you. They are gold, set with rubies, emeralds and diamonds and are signed by big names such as Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels and Tiffany. Don't you know a sapphire when you see one?

A private collection of 70 novelty brooches and earrings, mostly from the Fifties and Sixties, has estimates mainly in the £2,000-£5,000 range (including multiple lots) at Christie's on Wednesday (11am).

The collection has attracted dozens of telephone inquiries from people who will be bidding £30,000 or so for big parures (suites of matching jewellery) in the same sale.

The rich, you might think, have unusual taste. Like, none at all. But there are subtler ways of flaunting wealth than toting big rocks. These are for casual, day wear, at tea parties, coffee mornings and on the grouse moors, during the hours before the tiaras come out.

Their humorous kitschiness makes a statement of serious wealth. To those in the know, they are an in-joke - although it is difficult to understand how anybody could avoid grinning at a pair of Sixties coral and

emerald duck brooches with over-stylised, Disney-like features, by Van Cleef & Arpels. They are estimated £3,000-£5,000.

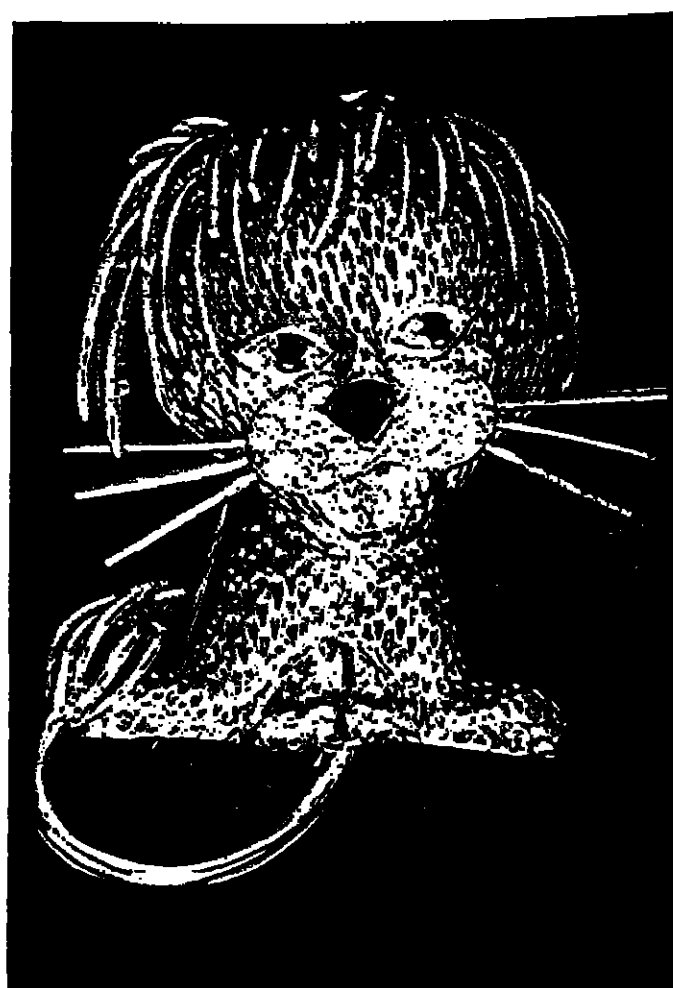
For rich, romantic suitors, such expensive truffles provide a way of giving a girl some best friends in an atmosphere of light-hearted frivolity. The little red box containing the plain diamond engagement ring comes later.

So beware those cute, gem-set Easter bunnies: they could be a tender trap. As a gift from husband to wife, they sidestep the risk of buying jewellery that is not to her taste.

Those who cannot afford real jewellery are the most likely to succumb to such gem-set trivia and associate it with £2-a-time costume jewellery pinned to cards.

But, for those who know jewellery and its history, they have different associations: as far back as the Renaissance, jewellers fashioned animal conceits around big pearls whose shapes suggested a leopard's head, or perhaps a sea-sprite. In the 18th century, birds of rose-cut diamonds holding garlands were all the rage and are now period pieces.

Napoleon took the bumble bee as his Imperial symbol and the jeweller Boucheron made whole hives of them, set with diamonds and precious stones.



Pussy cat, pussy cat: can you tell which one is £38 from Butler & Wilson and which is several thousand pounds from Van Cleef & Arpels? (The one below is the more affordable version)

Fifties sking bird brooch, lotted with four others at an estimated £2,500-£3,500, though unsigned, will rise in value as other ski memorabilia rises. In the same collection are Victorian brooches that are more naturalistic, less stylised - such as a demantoid, garnet, diamond and ruby bird brooch of about 1890, estimated £2,000-£3,000.

A guide to antique pieces, "Sentimental Jewellery", by Ann Louise Luthi, has just been issued by Shire Publications (£3.95 plus £1 p&p). If you buy at the sale, buy for love. It would be a pity to hide novelty jewellery in the safe, just because you hate the sight of it.

Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1 (0171-339 9000). Butler & Wilson, 20 South Molton Street, London W1 (0171-409 2955). Shire Publications, Cromwell House, Church Street, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 9AA (01844 344301).

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*Source: Microsip, all figures offer to bid, gross income reinvested, for periods ending 12/98. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to the future. The price of units and the income from them is not guaranteed and can fall as well as rise. The Portfolio Trust has been available as a PEP since January 1995. Full written terms and conditions are available on request. For your security, all calls are recorded. When the tax status of PEPs changes after 6/4/99, subject to any Government limits, you will be able to transfer to a Royal & Sun Alliance ISA free of any administration charge. Royal & Sun Alliance Unit Trust Management Limited, registered in England, no 2730242, is a member of the Royal & Sun Alliance Life & Pensions Marketing Group. Registered Office 1 Bartholomew Lane, London, EC2N 2AB. Members of the Royal & Sun Alliance Life & Pensions Marketing Group are regulated by the Personal Investment Authority, solely for life assurance, pensions and unit trust business, and by FSCS.

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Lessons from the Sage of Omaha



THE
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Mid-March brings with it many old favourites: among them, the first signs of spring, the Chel-

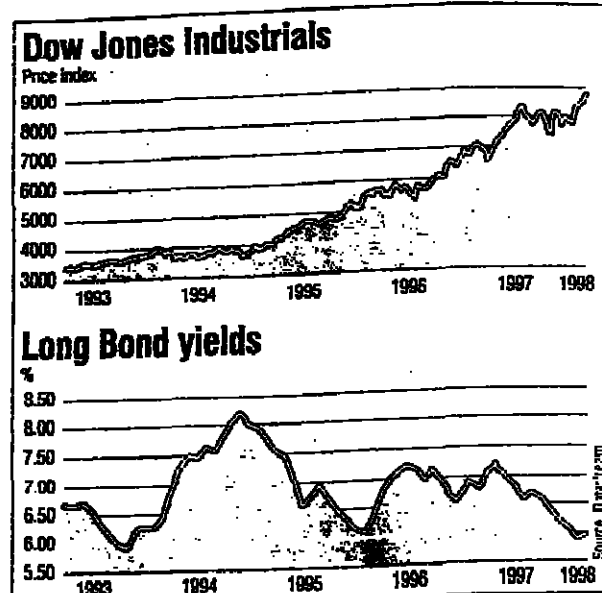
tenham race meeting, the Budget (after a short interlude when it was moved to the autumn) and - for investment groupies such as myself - the arrival of the "Sage of Omaha's" annual report to shareholders. When I made my first visit to the annual meeting of Buffett's holding company, Berkshire Hathaway, in 1991, the number of those who turned up could still be counted in their hundreds. The meeting, at which Buffett and his lifelong business partner Charlie Munger sit and talk about the business of investment for hours on end, was still small enough to be held in the local theatre in Omaha, Nebraska, Buffett's home town.

Now, however, as his fame has spread, the attendance has grown exponentially: last year, the turnout had grown to 7,500. Such is his fame that no stock market anywhere in the world is immune from the impact of what he has to say. Last Monday, Buffett released his latest annual report and accounts for the year just gone. It showed another year of progress, with the company's book value up 34 per cent on the year - not bad in isolation, but "no great triumph", according to Buffett, in a year when the market overall was up 33 per cent. Having been reported as warning last year that share prices were looking very fully valued, his comment this year that the current level of Wall Street prices could still be justified in valuation terms was enough to spark another round of buying around the world.

All this despite the fact that, by his own admission, Buffett's actions betray a real concern about the riskiness of many stock prices at today's levels. Buffett's views are as follows. While he professes to having no views about which the market is going to move tomorrow, he does, "try in a very rough way to value it". A year ago, he said that, with the Dow Jones at its then level of 7,070 and the long bond rate at 6.89 per cent, the market did not look overvalued provided that two essential conditions continued to be met. One was that interest rates at the long end of the scale did not rise; and the second was that American companies continued to earn the "remarkable returns on equity" that they have been achieving in the last few years.

So far, says Buffett, both conditions have held: returns on equity have remained "exceptionally high", the market has bounded on to new records, while interest rates have fallen further, with the long bond rate occasionally dropping below 6 per cent. Buffett himself confirmed the reports which emerged in the autumn that he had been putting money into government bonds, a ploy which can only pay off if interest rates continue to fall. (In the event, so the annual report discloses, the profit on the bonds has been around \$600m, on an investment of around \$4.0bn).

The trouble is, says Buffett, that finding good value shares in the current climate is difficult even if you make the assumption that his two conditions will continue to hold for a little while longer. The upshot is that while it may be still be right to buy new shares at today's levels, the height the market has reached has materially eroded the margin of safety that Ben Graham (Buffett's original mentor) identified as the "cornerstone of intelligent investing". By his own admission, Buffett has been putting a bigger chunk of his money into bonds and what he calls "unconventional commitments". Thus, he has money tied up in forward contracts for oil, and has also been building a position in silver (profit at year-end: \$97.4m). "We are not pleased with our prospects for committing income funds," Buffett writes. "It may be some time before we



find opportunities that get us truly excited". Mind you, that last bit can be taken with a pinch of salt. Buffett has been saying the same kind of thing for years now, and each year he manages to conjure some new profitable rabbit out of the hat. When he started buying Coca-Cola 10 years ago, everyone at the time said he had clearly run out of new ideas. His shareholding has since risen more than tenfold to \$13.3bn - so much so that Coke alone now accounts for 37 per cent of the world's most successful stock market investor's portfolio.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET: JOHN ANDREW

How to avoid depression after a crash

What goes up can come down again. Shares are no exception



Historic plunge: Wall Street fell 13.2 per cent on 29 October 1929. Hulton Getty

It may seem odd, at a time when share prices are roaring ahead, to write about the opposite side of the coin. It is a word stock market investors do not like to hear - crash. However, we have to face reality.

Even though they may be reaching record highs here in London, the price of shares do plummet from time to time - as Far Eastern markets have amply demonstrated. It is not a pleasant experience to see your capital evaporate into thin air but there is not a great deal one can do about it. The golden rule is not to panic. Ask anyone to name two stock market crashes and inevitably they will respond, "Wall Street 1929; Black Monday 1987". These are certainly the best-known cases when shares "fell out of bed". However, they are by no means the only or the first two cases. Inevitably, in the future there will be further upsets.

England's first stock market crash was in 1720 when the South Sea Company went bust. In 1745, a fall in share prices was triggered when the Jacobite forces of the Young Pretender reached Derby. Now forgotten is the run on the London bank Pole & Company in 1825, resulting in a financial crisis of such proportions that it was said England was only a day away from a barter economy. Then last year, all the world's stock markets took a tumble when markets in the Far East crashed.

Contrary to legend, the Wall Street Crash of 1929 did not result in stockbrokers throwing themselves from Manhattan's

skyscrapers. However, Wall Street did fall by 13.2 per cent on 29 October 1929 and the Great Depression started. An even greater fall was experienced on 19 October 1987, more commonly referred to as Black Monday. Shares fell on Wall Street by 25 per cent. In London, prices fell by 10.6 per cent, cutting more than £50bn from the value of shares. The following day prices fell a further 12 per cent. By 9 November, the London market had fallen 32 per cent.

Statistics, of course, do not tell us how badly private investors were hurt. As the crash came at a period when the government was encouraging wider share ownership, many investors who had purchased shares relatively recently did lose large sums. So, too, did speculators in penny shares.

The speed of the crash resulted in everyone being taken by surprise. Phone lines to brokers quickly became jammed and it was virtually impossible to sell shares on the first day and very difficult on the second. Those who were successful in getting through had

to wait weeks for the proceeds, for brokers could just not cope with the administrative burden.

Investors in unit trusts fared no better. Some management groups temporarily suspended dealing while others, allegedly, did not answer their telephones. Unit holders who did manage to sell discovered that they did so at the "cancellation price", which is the lowest price allowed by the regulators for the repurchase of units.

Unlike the 1929 crash, investors did not have to wait a long time to see the market recover. Indeed, 21 months later the Footsie was back to its pre 19 October 1987 position. Although the market ended the year higher than when it began, this was not comforting for many investors.

Anyone who bought shares at the top of the market in July 1987 had to wait five years before the prices of their shares substantially rose above the price at which they were acquired. So, what can we learn from all this?

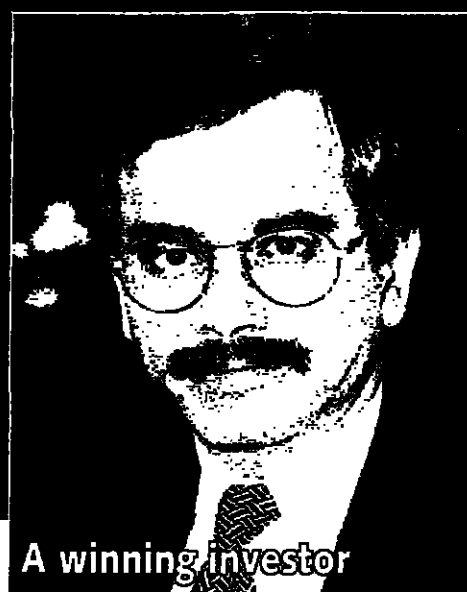
The golden rule is only invest "capital" in shares. In

other words, you must have a reasonable level of savings before you even think about the stock market.

Ideally the equivalent of three months' income should be kept in an instant access savings account. Additional "comfort" funds should be kept in a notice account for emergencies. Certainly, do not place money you are saving for a future planned expenditure into shares.

Shares are not for everyone. If fluctuations in share prices are likely to cause you sleepless nights, then think about "safe" investments such as interest-bearing accounts or "guaranteed" investments that pay a bonus at the end of five years if the stock market does well and returns your money in full if it does not.

Remember the stock market must be viewed as a medium to long-term investment - that is for at least five years. If the market plunges, do not panic. Providing all the economic fundamentals are right and you have shares in good companies, all will hopefully come right in the end.



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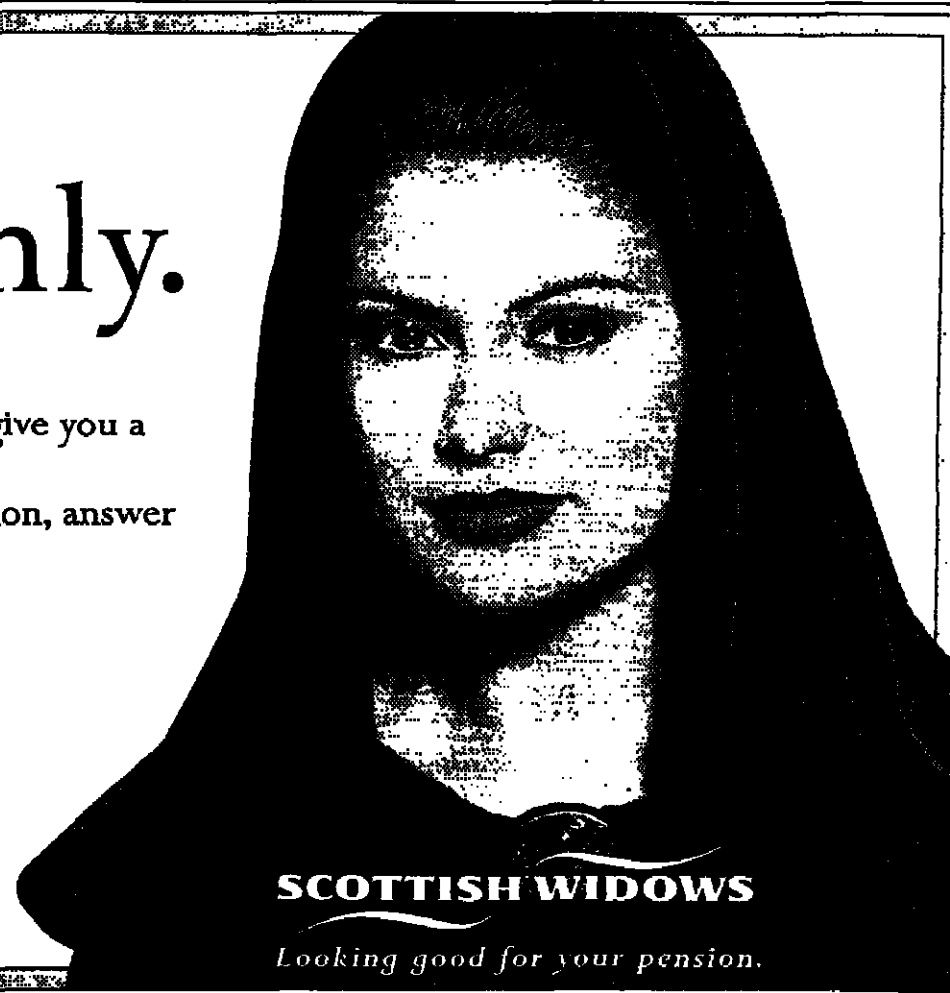
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When the Docklands, London, was bombed in 1996, many flat-owners were uninsured

The price of protection against terrorist damage

Changes by insurers after IRA bombs in the City of London have left tenants liable for terrorist damage. Paul Slade reports

As the Northern Ireland peace talks lurch from optimism to cynicism to despair and back again, one forgotten element of the process is that of how to insure against the damaging effects of another UK mainland bombing campaign in the event of a breakdown in the talks.

Among those most affected are the new and fashionable breed of inner-city dwellers, drawn to live in converted offices and warehouses. In some

cases, they may even be living in blocks which still contain shops or offices. If so, they could drastically cut the cost of covering their home against the risk of terrorism.

Premiums for this type of cover on commercial premises soared in 1997, when the St Mary Axe bomb in the City of London led European re-insurers to rethink their view on terrorist risk in the UK. When another City explosion caused a further £1bn-plus of damage in 1993, they said they would no longer accept the risk passed on by UK insurance companies for terrorist damage.

UK insurers were forced to create their own reinsurer, Pool Re, instead. Terrorism premiums now go to Pool Re which, at the end of 1996, had amassed a fund of about £700m to meet future claims.

Until 1992, terrorist damage was included in mainstream commercial property insurance. But, under the new system, only £100,000 per property is covered. Pool Re cut its rates by 20 per cent in the riskiest areas at the beginning of this year, reflecting a claim-free year. But getting cover for a building's full value still means paying a hefty extra premium.

Philip Perry is terrorism underwriter at Hiscox, which runs a number of Lloyd's syndicates operating outside the Pool Re system. He says: "If you take a big commercial property in London worth £100m, and insure it for fire perils, you might pay a premium of £30,000 or £40,000. The terrorism cover will cost you another £115,000. Previously, you, as a client, had that cover for free, because it was within the £30,000."

Perry's example refers to Pool Re's standard premiums for commercial property in the highest-risk areas of central London. Residential rates in the same areas would mean paying just £8,000. Both figures are before insurance premium tax.

This leaves leaseholders in a vulnerable position. The freeholders who own residential or mixed blocks will typically buy cover for the whole block and pass it on piece by piece to individual tenants.

But they can get cover at residential rates only if they can demonstrate to Pool Re that 80 per cent or more of the property in question is devoted to residential use. Lower rates should then apply to the residential part of the block, and be passed on to tenants.

Mike Thomsett is managing director of Reality Insurance, whose clients include the huge central London Grosvenor Estates. He says: "I think it is quite reasonable for tenants to approach their landlord and ask them to confirm there is terrorist cover on the building, and to make enquiries to see whether it's possible to pay the residential rate rather than the commercial rate - because that can produce an enormous saving."

Some fear the increased cost of buying terrorism insurance separately may lead local councils or private landlords to save money by not buying the cover. When the Docklands bomb exploded in February 1996, two of the residential blocks damaged turned out to be uninsured. One was owned by Tower Hamlets local authority and the other by a private developer.

Leslie Lucas, chief executive

of Pool Re says: "The Tower Hamlets building was occupied by tenants but, for some reason or another, the local authority had decided not to buy the cover. The other building had no tenants and, because there were no tenants, there was no one to charge the premiums out to. It would have been quite a hefty premium, and they decided to run the risk themselves."

Both those buildings sustained very substantial damage. I think the temptation is there to save money, and people have to weigh up the risks."

But what happens if you are a leaseholder living in an uninsured property which is damaged as a result of terrorism? The position will depend partly on the details of your own lease. If the lease contains a covenant stating the landlord will take out insurance, you may be able to insist he reimburse you for any damage from his own pocket.

Equally, however, the lease may contain a clause saying you will take insurance for your own part of the block. If you have not done so, it may be the landlord who is pursuing you.

Homeowners are not affected by the 1992 changes. In their case terrorism cover is still included in their basic house and contents policy. Thomsett is a trenchant critic of the whole system of terrorism insurance here, which he believes is far more tortuous than it need be. He says: "You walk down a street in SW1, and you can't tell from the outside whether it's commercial offices or a residential house. A bomb doesn't identify the residential bits as being less bombable, so the whole thing's a nonsense, really."

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7/PEP SURVEY

Balancing risk and reward

Making tax savings is pointless if you lose money on the underlying investment as a result. Tony Lyons reports

Before deciding which PEP to invest in, you should make sure that you understand the risks involved. No one should buy a PEP just because of the tax advantages.

PEPs are suitable for taxpayers who have enough capital, or who can save regular amounts, which they can place at some degree of risk by investing in equities - whether directly in shares or indirectly, through a collective fund such as an investment or unit trust.

In order to make real gains, you must be prepared to invest for at least five years. According to Jane Drew of Fidelity Investments: "Investors need to understand the relationship between risk and reward in order to make sensible investment choices." In other words, the higher the potential return, the greater the risks. When it comes to equities and other high risk investments be prepared to make losses as well as gains.

The lowest-risk investments are cash and near-cash fixed interest accounts, such as those offered by the banks and building

societies. More risky are bonds, then come equities, with collective investments being less of a risk than going directly into shares. This is because unit or investment trusts provide you with widely diversified portfolios.

Share prices are determined by many factors, including the health of the economy. Ultimately, if there are more buyers than sellers, prices will rise.

Most investors will be happier with a PEP that invests in a collective fund. But even here there are ways of reducing risk. All PEP brochures now show the degree of risk attached to any particular investment. Lowest of all are protected funds that guarantee you will at least get back your original capital after five or six years. These are followed by tracker funds which simply mirror the performance of a chosen stock market index, usually the FTSE 100 or FTSE All Share.

After these come more actively managed funds. Balanced UK investing funds, along with managed funds, are generally seen as being lower risk than growth funds. On the scale of



Safety first: Picking your investments carefully can reduce the risk inherent in stock markets

risks, then come international funds, European and US specialist funds, smaller company funds, until you get to the really high-risk end of the spectrum of the emerging markets.

Even after deciding what degree of risk you are prepared to take, it can pay to look at the volatility of a particular fund. This is a statistical device for highlighting the degree of variation in a fund's unit price from the average - "the relationship between the price

movements of an investment and its benchmark index", says Ms Drew.

The more volatile a fund, the more its unit price fluctuates. This is a statistical way of measuring how the price at any time deviates from its average price, usually over a one or three-year period. An historic guide only, a highly volatile unit price does not necessarily imply a bad investment. It just means that, at any given time, its price could vary widely from the sector average.

"We generally look at six time periods at least," says Chris Hardy of Reuters Funds, who provide statistical analysis. These measures of volatility are sometimes available in specialist magazines such as *Money Management*. "However, if you go back too far, it can become irrelevant," warns Mr Hardy. "Over time, many funds change or amend their investment aims. This sort of analysis is only for the professional adviser or very sophisticated investor."

The best guide to future performance

The most lucrative place to put your PEP cash five years ago was an investment trust little known to private investors called Scottish National. By the beginning of 1998, a £6,000 five-year PEP investment in the capital shares of Scottish National, managed by Gartmore, was worth a staggering £33,700. Sadly, the trust is to be wound up later this year and shares are no longer available, although a successor trust has been created.

Even if shares in the original trust were still available, it is unlikely they could repeat this dramatic appreciation, which was largely the result of the trust's structure. But that's the danger of looking at past returns to see which are the most promising investment prospects.

Past success is no guarantee of future returns, but performance tables can still yield useful information. Juliet Oxborrow explains

they tell you of performance that has already passed.

However, past performance can point to important trends in the stock market. For example, continental European unit trusts have now come powerfully to the fore, returning on average 22 per cent growth in the year to 1 March. Top performers, like the Newton European, have grown by more than a third over the past 12 months. Financial advisers believe this growth will continue.

It is also worth looking at the laggards in the market as they may be due for a change in fortunes. Japan is tipped for recovery and, even if this again proves to be a false dawn, at least it is currently very cheap to invest in. However, as a non-European fund, it can only account for a maximum of £1,500 of your general PEP allowance.

Rather than looking at investment funds in isolation, look at them in the context of other funds in the same areas to see how they have performed relative to their peers. Managers who can contain losses in a falling market should have the skills to outperform in a rising market.

Some investment houses, notably Schroder, argue that smaller company funds are also ripe for a re-rating, having been left out of the stock market rally of the last two years.

If you are a cautious investor, pick a widely spread international fund which can chop and change between markets to scoop up the best growth. Some of the largest and oldest investment trusts are internationally invested, including the Foreign & Colonial trust and the Witan trust, managed by Henderson. These are highly venerated trusts whose shares are constantly in demand and

so are unlikely to see sudden dramatic lurches in value.

Among unit trusts, the best international funds have been the highly specialised ones that invest in a particular sector of the stock market, most notably Framlington Financial and Save & Prosper's Financial Securities fund, which both invest across the world's banks, life insurers and investment houses.

Also look at performance tables to get a "feel" for a management house's pedigree. The "holy quartet" of Fidelity, Jupiter, Perpetual and Schroder are often recommended because their funds have provided above-average returns across many sectors.

Juliet Oxborrow is editor of *'What PEP'*.

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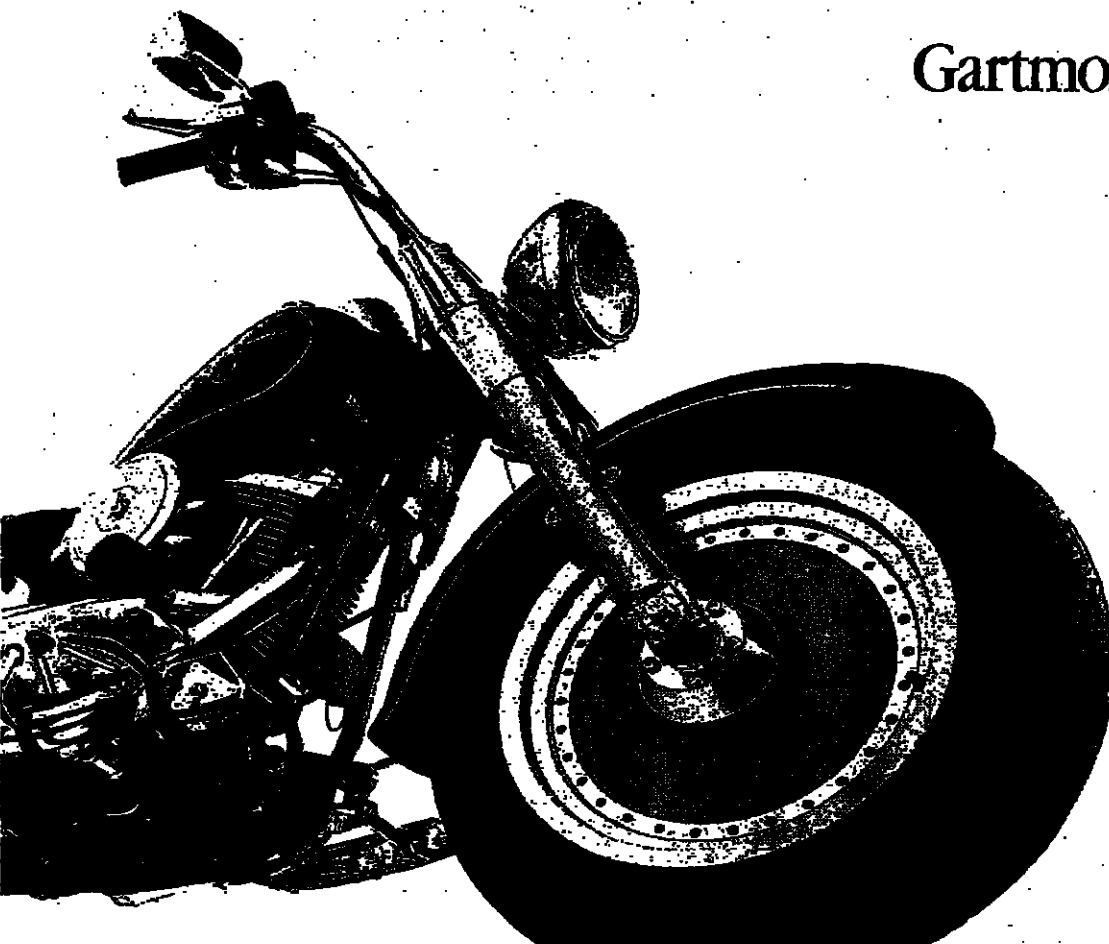
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Moral money making

More and more unit trust PEPs are adhering to ethical codes when they invest. By Tony Bonsignore

Many people feel uneasy about the manner in which their investments actually deliver a return. The usual concerns centre on where the money is being invested, such as companies that damage the environment, tobacco firms, weapons manufacturers or whether products are tested on animals. It is often too difficult to ensure that your hard-earned cash is being invested with the best of intentions. Complex legal requirements mean that it can often be hard to find out exactly where all your money is

going. Even if you are able to find this information it can be a difficult and time-consuming process to check that each company listed lives up to the required standards. And, even then, can an investor be sure that any particular company does not have links with another firm that may not be as clean as it might be?

Fortunately, many investment companies have reacted to this demand with the launch of a range of ethical unit trust PEPs. This type of fund has become increasingly popular. Ethical funds only invest in firms which adhere to a strict ethical code. They often spend large sums of money looking into the activities of a particular firm for fear of picking one bad apple and alienating thousands of their own investors.

The market in ethical unit trusts is becoming quite large. There are now 24 unit trusts which could be classed as ethical, compared with only 17 just

one year ago. The amount of money invested in these funds has grown massively. By the end of last month there was more than £1.5bn invested in ethical unit trusts, compared with under £830m at the same time in 1997.

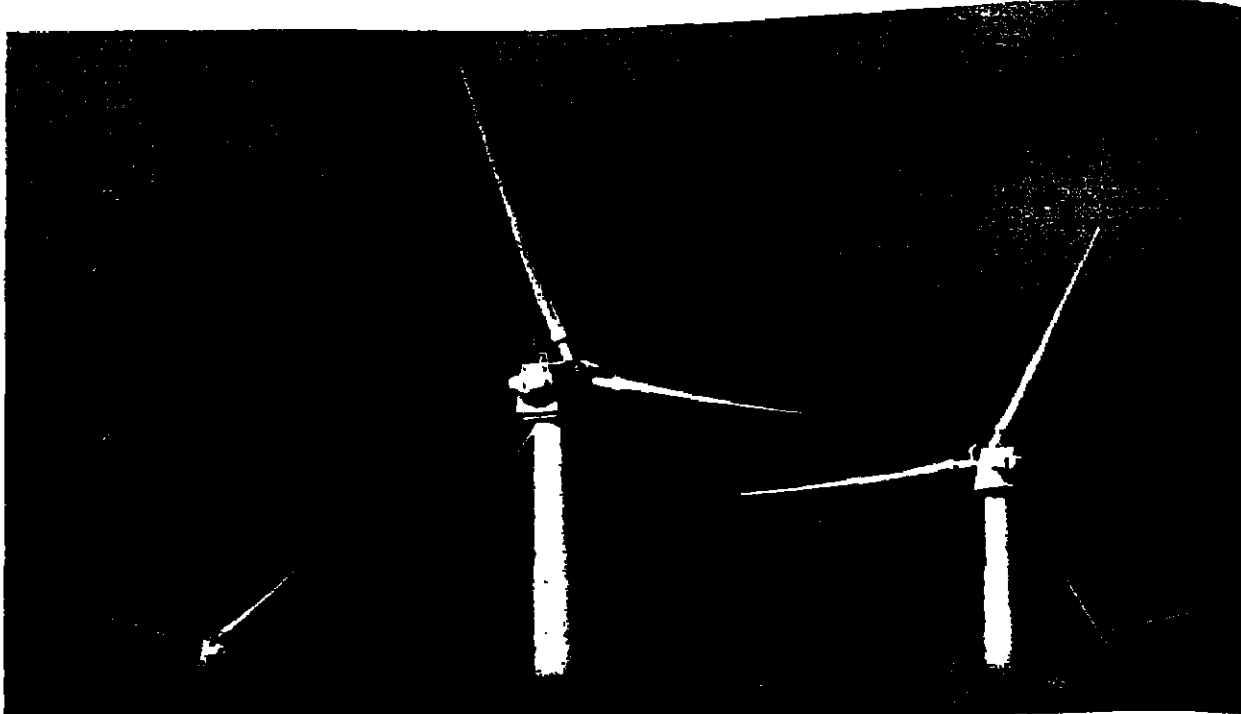
Most of the ethical funds are now available to PEP investors. Providers that offer ethical PEPs include such household names as Equitable Life, NPI, Scottish Equitable, Standard Life and Friends Provident. The latter's Stewardship fund is far and away the market leader, with over £440m under management. The Environ unit trust, run by Co-operative Insurance Services, is the only other unit trust with more than £100m of investments.

The ethical funds currently available come in a number of different forms. Some, such as the Stewardship fund, refuse to invest in anything it considers to be unethical while others, such as the Jupiter ecology

fund, have a particular focus.

There is also some variation as to how strict a fund's ethical rules are. If you are thinking about investing in such a unit trust, be sure to ask what its exact ethical criteria are to avoid any unpleasant surprises later on. If you are still unsure, the Ethical Investment Research Service (Eiris), a charitable organisation, provides a detailed guide on each of the different funds called *Money and Ethics*.

The best news is that being ethical does not involve sacrificing performance. For example, over the five years to the beginning of March 1998, the best performing fund, Framlington Health, (while not strictly an ethical fund) recorded a 152 per cent increase in its value. So an investment of £1,000 in that fund in March 1993 would now be worth more than £2,500. This compares with just over £2,250 for the FTSE All Share index and just £1,790 for



Generating profits: Seven out of 17 ethical funds have outperformed the average for all unit trusts over five years

the average UK unit trust over the same period. Seven of the 17 ethical unit trusts which have been going for five years or more have outperformed the average for all unit trusts.

So if you are considering investing some money but your

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worrying about what harm your investment may be doing. Tony Bonsignore writes for *Financial Adviser*.

Contact Eiris on 0171-735 1351 for details of its guide. *The Independent* has also pro-

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9/PEP SURVEY

Reasons to climb aboard the last PEP bandwagon

After fear cometh the rejoicing. This week's announcement by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, that all investments in PEPs will retain their tax-free status even after the new Individual Savings Account comes into being in April next year means a fantastic last-minute opportunity for savers.

Even so, if recent financial surveys are to be believed, the majority of the British public is still unsure of the benefits of PEPs, what the rules governing investment into them are and how to go about finding a good PEP provider. Many of these issues are discussed in more depth in our survey. Here are the answers to some key questions about PEPs.

A PEP is basically a tax-free wrapper which can be placed around certain types of investments, such as shares, unit trusts and investment trusts. Any income or gains from PEP investments are tax free, and over the years these tax benefits can be worth hundreds of pounds.

You can invest up to £6,000 a year in a general PEP and you must invest through a PEP manager. You can only have one general PEP per year, although it is possible to transfer out of one PEP and into another during the same year.

A general PEP can be managed or self-select. With a managed PEP, the PEP manager makes all the investment decisions for you. With a self-select PEP you decide what invest-

Now Gordon Brown has guaranteed a future for PEPs in the Budget, Abigail Montrose answers some of the key questions for investors wondering if they should claim their allowance

ments are in your PEP and you manage them. The vast majority of investors are better off spreading their risk and investing in a whole range of shares - this way you are not relying on just one or two companies to do well.

The best way to do this is through a collective investment such as a unit trust or investment trust. With these investments your money is pooled with money from hundreds of other investors and used to buy shares in a whole range of companies across many industries. The funds are run by experienced investment managers who can make expert decisions on which companies to invest in.

Many unit trust and investment trust houses act as PEP managers and offer access to their funds through a PEP. Competition is such that often it is cheaper to invest in a fund via a PEP than to invest direct.

Unit trust PEPs are the most common. You buy units in the trust, each of which reflects the actual value of its share in the underlying assets in the fund. When you want to cash in your investment, you simply sell the units back to the fund manager. Unit trust man-

agers charge an initial fee and an annual fee for managing the fund to cover research and dealing costs, plus commission to whoever sold you the plan.

Investment trusts work in much the same way as unit trusts, except you buy shares rather than units in the fund and these are quoted on the Stock Exchange. This means the price of investment trust shares is determined by demand and supply for the shares rather than simply mirroring the value of the underlying assets in the fund.

When an investment trust's shares are quoted at less than the actual value of the underlying assets in the fund, the trust is said to be trading at a discount. Where the reverse occurs, the shares are said to be trading at a premium.

"Currently, the average investment trust is trading at a discount of 12 per cent," says Annabel Brodie-Smith, of the Association of Investment Trust Companies (AITC).

This means the investor can buy 100p worth of assets for only 88p. However, you must then look at the other important indicators like past performance, price history, the track record of the manage-

ment and the investment policy of the trust.

The investment trust industry has begun taking steps to narrow discounts. If this works and investment trust share prices start to rise to more closely reflect the underlying value of their assets, investors clearly will benefit.

If you are interested in investing in investment trust shares but are worried you may choose a fund that performs poorly, many investment houses, including Exeter Fund Managers, Gartmore, and Henderson now offer the option of spreading risk by investing in a wider range of their PEPable funds.

For those who like the idea of spreading their PEP investment over a range of funds, but would prefer to invest in unit trusts rather than investment trusts, it is worth considering a "fund of funds". These buy units in a whole range of unit trusts, usually managed by the same investment house, so diluting the risk of being invested in just one unit trust

which turns out to be a poor performer.

"But while there is no danger of these funds being the worst performers, they will also never be top of the pops either," points out Don Clark, managing director of Wolverhampton-based independent financial advisers, Torquill Clark. "These unit trusts give greater diversity but they also can be a recipe for mediocrity," he warns.

If you like the idea of investing across several funds but would like to choose the funds yourself, Skandia's Multi-PEP could be the answer. This allows you to invest in a range of unit trusts but they all are sheltered in the one PEP.

You can choose from 76 funds offered by 17 different fund management groups. Minimum investment is £500 into each fund. But the catch to watch out for, however, is the charges. As well as paying the unit trusts' initial and annual fees, you also have to pay Skandia 0.75 per cent for managing the PEP.

The AITC has produced a free fact sheet on investment trust PEPs, available by calling 0171-431 5222. For a free guide to unit trust PEPs contact the Association of Unit Trust and Investment Funds on 0181-207 1361.

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PEP NEWS IN BRIEF

The Government's decision on ISAs (see our front-page story), removes fears by many fund managers that the cost of transferring their existing PEPs into ISAs could reach hundreds of millions of pounds.

It also paves the way for a sales bonanza in which PEP providers will compete to sell PEPs until the April 1999 deadline. Watch out for low-cost bargains in the coming months as the market heats up. But don't buy just on price alone: your PEPs, once bought, will probably remain invested for many years. Research the market and choose on performance too.

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10/PEP SURVEY

Geared up for income

Returns on corporate bonds are higher, and risks lower, than equity investments. Simon Read looks at how the youngest member of the PEP family can suit nervous investors

Corporate bond PEPs are the youngest of the PEP range, having been introduced in July 1995. They represent an ideal way to generate a decent income. On top of that, corporate bonds are seen as safer investments than more traditional general PEPs.

Corporate bond PEPs represent a lower risk because they invest in fixed-interest bonds and other securities, such as convertibles and preference shares.

But a lower risk doesn't mean no risk. Corporate bonds are fixed-interest bonds issued by companies to raise money. The companies pay interest on their bonds and repay the capital later on a pre-set date.

If a company goes bust, however, your loan is unlikely to be repaid. In practice, this is unlikely to happen because only blue-chip companies issue corporate bonds.

There is a wide choice of corporate bond PEPs, but what they all have in common is that they are set up to generate income.

Convertibles are used by some managers. They too offer a fixed rate of interest, but they also offer investors the chance to convert their option into shares. For that

reason they offer lower returns than corporate bonds. But they do offer the extra potential of enjoying the capital growth associated with equities.

Convertibles have, therefore, often been more heavily promoted as a relatively low-risk entry into the equity market.

Both corporate bonds and convertibles are seldom invested in directly by private individuals. Investors can use the specialist unit trusts on offer from fund managers. It's a game worth playing as yields, the return you get, can be much greater with corporate bonds at 7-8 per cent, compared with 3-4 per cent with equities.

Additionally, corporate bonds are less risky than ordinary shares in that if a company goes bust, corporate bondholders will be paid out before ordinary shareholders.

But the risk of losing out is still possible. There are often two yields quoted on corporate bond PEPs, the "running yield" and the "gross redemption yield".

The first relates to the current estimated level of income you'll get from the fund, but this can be misleading because it takes

no account of any capital gains or losses. The notion of capital rising or falling in this type of investment may seem confusing, but that's because while there may be fixed interest on offer, there is no guarantee on capital. Bond prices vary according to the prevailing market conditions and the timing of buying and selling bonds can affect the return.

Gross redemption yield in fact gives a better indication of the return on your investment in a corporate bond PEP as it takes into account gains or losses on capital, as well as income. Comparing the redemption yield with the running yield may, in fact, reveal that the gross return of the fund may fall over time, particularly if the running yield is much higher.

How to choose? Obviously, the yield is something to consider but charges should also be taken into account. This is because they have a much greater effect on corporate bond PEPs than general PEPs because your capital is unlikely to be growing. High charges will therefore erode your capital quite quickly whereas in an equity-linked PEP, the growth should offset the charges effect.

Pick and mix portfolios

Self-select personal equity plans (PEPs) are for investors prepared to make the final decision about what to invest in via their PEPs. This might be individual shares or a choice of unit or investment trusts. But you must feel confident about making your own investment decisions.

Equally though, that doesn't mean you have to be an expert. Gavin Oldham of The Share Centre, one of the many brokers to offer self-select plans, says: "We feel they are suitable for most investors." He reckons that, unless you're a total beginner, a self-select PEP could be useful as long as you are prepared to take at least some advice on your investments.

Not least, this is because self-select PEPs offer more flexibility than managed funds. If you invest in a PEP from one of the big unit or investment trust providers, it can be difficult to switch 'out' of the fund you choose, especially if you want to

Self-select PEPs allow you to choose which funds and shares to invest in, all in a tax-efficient wrapper. David Prosser reports

move to another PEP manager. But a self-select PEP lets you change the investments you hold whenever you want.

Self-select plans are also often cheaper than managed PEPs. Initial charges are rare, though you may have to pay a set-up fee of, perhaps, £50. Annual charges are levied in different ways but are not likely to add up to more than 1 per cent of the value of your portfolio, particularly if you hold shares directly rather than through unit and investment trusts.

But even if you use your self-select PEP to hold funds, it often works out cheaper than investing via a managed PEP. Do remember there are dealing charges. If you deal often, these fees mount up. Expect to pay between 0.75 and 1.5 per cent of the value of your deal on sales and purchases worth up to £10,000, more if you want advice.

Ian Millward of independent financial adviser Chase de Vere disagrees with Gavin Oldham. "Self-select plans are really only for sophisticated investors," he maintains.

Most self-select PEP providers are stockbrokers who will deal on your behalf on an execution-only basis, without advice, or with investment advice. Some only offer execution-only services. The Association of Private Client Investment Managers and Stockbrokers will supply you with details of all brokers offering self-select PEPs.

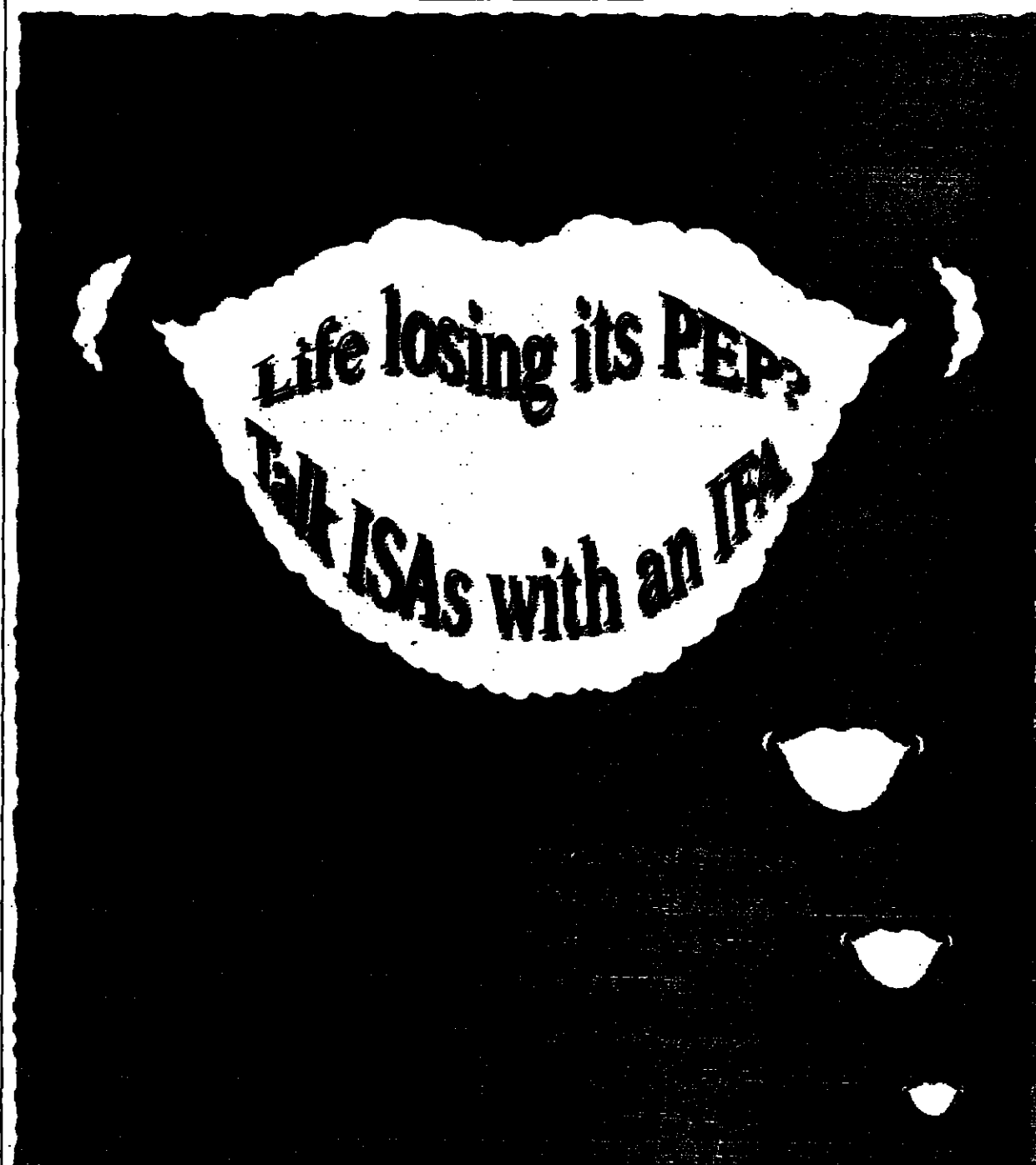
Some brokers also offer corporate PEPs, which are similar to self-select PEPs except that corporate PEPs are set up by companies to encourage people to buy their shares. As a result, with most corporate PEPs, you are usually restricted to holding shares in just one company. The plan can be set up as a general PEP, in which case the maximum investment allowed is £5,000, or as a single company PEP, where you can invest just £3,000 in any one tax year.

Corporate PEPs are usually good value, and can be a good investment if you believe in the prospects for your company. On the other hand, putting a whole PEP allowance into one stock leaves you very exposed.

David Prosser is features editor of *Investors Chronicle*.

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صكرا من الامل

Off-plan can be perilous

You may escape damp rot, but buying sight unseen still has its pitfalls, writes Penny Jackson.

In the past few years, British buyers have warmed to the idea of buying in new developments from plan. Not only can they choose exactly what they want but, in a rising market, they can sit back and watch its value grow while it is being built.

It all sounds so simple, far less trouble than worrying about damp rot, settlement and unsavoury vendors. But at least the second-hand market is the devil we know. While we may rail against certain aspects of buying and selling, the property is there to be seen and we are familiar with the procedures and the role of estate agents, solicitors and surveyors. When it comes to buying off plan, though, the questions that need to be asked are very different.

The intense marketing of some new developments only serves to further cloud people's minds to the pertinent issues and Linda Beane of Beane Pearce, a firm of solicitors, has real concerns about how ill-prepared some buyers are. "They are likely to have spent more time on the small print of their holiday brochures," she says.

In London, particularly, the shortage of good property has fuelled the rush to buy off-plan. In a document for prospective buyers, Beane Pearce runs through a list of how to proceed sensibly.

Crucial is the warning not to be panicked into buying by the crush of people apparently making speedy transactions. It is necessary only to recall scenes at developments such as County Hall in London to know how a carefully orchestrated marketing campaign can create queues and a panic among potential buyers fearful of losing an apartment.

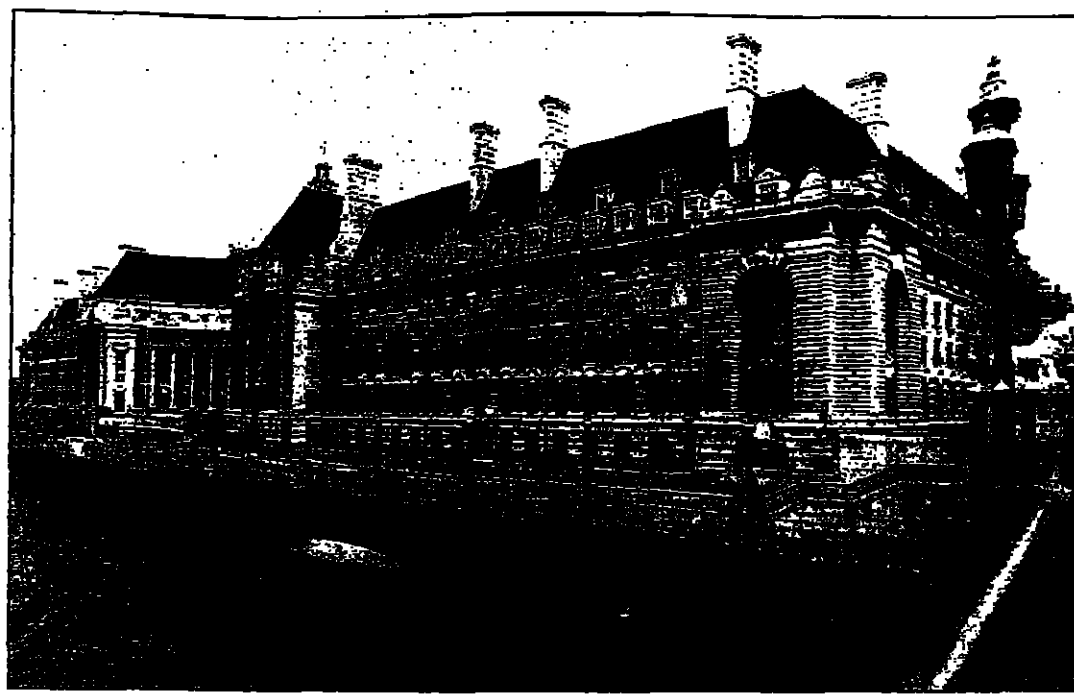
Buyers might even have exchanged contracts on the spot. The frenetic atmosphere can also persuade those who arrive at launches with their finances in place to overstretch themselves. Once the few well advertised and very attractively priced units go, it's on to normal prices.

"I have seen people spend £20,000 more than they intended to, as though it were £20," says Tom Marshall of Chutons. In order to speed things along, buyers in larger developments will often find a panel of solicitors on site during the sales days.

While they are independent and no one is obliged to use them, their selling point is that they are familiar with the documentation.

"If a developer has a large parcel of land, say, it is important to push the solicitor on its use. He could be in a difficult position if he has already looked at the paperwork," says Linda Beane. And the family solicitor may not be the answer either, if he or she is not familiar with purchasing off-plan.

At the Law Society, David McNell



County Hall in London was the scene of queues and panic among potential flat-buyers

recognises that for the panel of solicitors on a development, it is a lucrative business. "But if they have worked with a developer and know something they must not pass on to a purchaser they must withdraw immediately. There must be no conflict of interest. The obvious advantages of using a panel solicitor are that they will be cheaper and faster because they are not starting from scratch."

David Foulser, a solicitor with Bretherton Price Elgoods, specialises in new developments and is only too aware of the pitfalls. "The minute a developer suggests using a certain solicitor you might say that is putting more pressure on the buyer."

A further pressure is the deadline set by developers, who will threaten to withdraw the property after that date. Two or three weeks is often not long enough to complete a search of the wider area and usually the contract is

on a take it or leave it basis, explains Mr Foulser.

"What I consider grossly unfair is that despite all the fancy marketing, floor plans, and specifications, when the contracts arrive there is a clause which says the buyer cannot place any legal reliance on anything said to him by anyone other than the developer's solicitor. Plans and sales brochures are provided for information only. If you want to inspect the plans you might have to drive miles to the head office. Who is going to do that?" he asks.

One of David Foulser's clients recently refused to exchange when the developer's solicitor would not confirm a particular point. "It is madness. Most people would have caved in because they are desperate not to lose the property. Developers sell property on the terms they dictate."

In London, Point West, the converted air terminal in Cromwell Road

that went through rocky times during the recession with buyers losing their deposits, is being sold heavily this weekend. Some 126 flats are for sale and the sales office confirms that a building society and solicitors will be available to use them. So why are they invited in by developers? Edward Lewis of FPD Savills says it is easier if the solicitors have approved the form of the contract and understand the issues. If they are potentially going to be instructed on some 25 per cent of sales they can work for a more competitive fee. "All the potential problems should have been ironed out."

That may well be the case. But it wouldn't do any harm for those buying off-plan to be as rigorous about the standards of their property investment as they are about their holiday hotel.



PENNY JACKSON

Miras was ripe for the picking

If there was general rejoicing that mortgage interest relief (Miras) was not to be cut after all, it was a muted affair. If ever there was a plum for the Treasury to pick this was it, since everybody had prepared themselves for its demise.

The rising value of property and higher income levels have outstripped the usefulness of the tax relief of 15 per cent on the first £30,000, which falls to 10 per cent in April. Could not the £3m saved be better spent on those in housing need?

The Council of Mortgage Lenders believes that housing expenditure has to be looked at as a whole. Miras is of most importance in areas with low property values, according to Sue Anderson for the Council.

So perhaps it is all a matter of timing. If interest rates head downwards, at 5 per cent, it would mean about £12 to £13 a month to the average household budget.

What better opportunity could there be to sweep it away altogether.

A flurry of activity has followed the increase in stamp duty from 1.5 to 2 per cent on property above £250,000 and from 2 to 3 per cent on homes over £500,000. If buyers can rush things through by Tuesday, they could save themselves £5,000.

Richard Donnell of FPD Savills does not expect it to have a marked effect at the top of the market. Some buyers may hesitate, but those on tight budgets are more likely to hold back on things like renovation work. Winkworth, the London agents, find that of their properties for sale, some 45 per cent are priced in excess of £250,000. The national figure is about 2 per cent. They expect to see more properties joining the 11 they already have for sale at either £249,000 or £249,950.

Don't give up the day job - if you want a mortgage

The self-employed face discrimination when buying property, reports Ginetta Vedrickas.

You want a quick sale. Two buyers make equivalent offers. Both appear serious and neither are in a chain. How do you choose? I found myself in this position some years ago and, having a slight preference for one buyer, sought my agent's advice. "Don't touch him with a bargepole," he barked. "He's self-employed."

I didn't and the sale was swift. Are the self-employed disadvantaged? And how can they maximise their purchasing power?

Stephen Smith, manager of the Dulwich branch of estate agency Bushell's, admits that alarm bells ring when applicants are self-employed. "We have more problems with them getting mortgages than anyone else. As agents it's our duty to make sure they can proceed so we will push them harder to see our mortgage specialist."

Stephen Smith loses less sleep over the long-term self-employed as they generally have several years' proof of earnings but

the newly entrepreneurial can irritate. "They come in, they've only been self-employed for four months and they wonder why building societies won't lend them the money. They make you laugh."

Liz Godwin knows the pressures facing freelancers more than most. A compulsive mover, six times in two years, she has resorted to a "non-status" mortgage for

each purchase. This type of loan caters for borrowers unable to supply adequate proof of income or with poor credit ratings. Lenders protect themselves by asking for a higher deposit and charging higher interest rates.

Liz is a successful, established artist and currently borrows from the Bank of Scotland. Surely she qualifies for a mortgage with favourable rates? "I've tried but it was so much hassle I gave up. It seems much easier just to get my accountant to send a letter basically saying I'm good for the loan."

In addition to unfavourable interest rates, freelancers can face accountancy bills of several hundred pounds.

Most lenders deny discrimination but the evidence suggests the contrary. Salaries bor-

rowers must prove their income for the last six months but self-employed applicants are frequently asked for two to three years' accounts plus a projection of their next year's earnings.

This can seriously hinder the amount they can borrow, particularly if their business is new. But could the self-employed do more to help themselves? One agent claimed that they have only themselves to blame: "They spend years trying to dodge paying tax so when they try to get a mortgage it hits them hard. On paper they're virtually on income support yet it's obvious they're rolling in it."

Richard Turnbull, mortgage broker for Patrick Knight, is more sympathetic. He has just received a call from Northern Rock re-

fusing a mortgage for David, a freelance sub-editor and Karen, a supply teacher. "It seems extremely unfair," says Richard. "They are highly experienced, professional people who choose to freelance. They have excellent credit ratings and a large deposit."

David and Karen have rented for almost three years and recently decided to buy a flat in London. Through their broker they applied for a mortgage from Northern Rock with a rate fixed at 5.99 per cent for 5 years. The "unbeatable" deal is for borrowers with a minimum deposit of 25 per cent, a requirement that David and Karen fulfil, yet they were refused.

What do they think of Northern Rock's attitude? "I think it's a bit 1950s," says David. "They are entitled to their opinion

but had they asked our landlord they would find that we have never once been late with the rent and we're not likely to default on our mortgage payments."

Northern Rock says it treats self-employed applicants equitably and considers all cases individually. But a spokesperson cautions: "Our criteria is not just to safeguard the lender but the borrower, too. If we refuse a mortgage application we're doing the customer a favour. Perhaps they are overstretching themselves and should look again."

Some lenders say they are making greater efforts in what many admit is a market in which they are less than pro-active.

Richard Turnbull believes that slowly relaxing attitudes are not keeping pace with his changing clientele: "In the current market more people than ever are taking a positive decision to give up their salaries and strike out on their own, so we need more flexibility from borrowers."

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